Under the Highest Leadership

JOHN DOUGLAS ADAM

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JOHN DOUGLAS ADAM

Author of "Paul in Everyday Life," "Religion and the Growing Mind," "Letters of Father and Son During College Days," etc.

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ASSOCIATION PRESS
124 East 28th Street, New York
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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO
E. B. A.

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CHAPTER I

Seeking God

Our goal is the presence of Jesus Christ. But we cannot begin there. For there are some whose company we greatly desire, who do not yet even believe in a personal God, and they are unable at present to pursue their search for God along the definitely Christian way.

Still they are seekers, and insist upon starting with us from the spot where they stand. If you do not wish to travel with us over their bit of the road, meet us later; in the meantime the rest of us will try to keep sympathetic step with our seeking friends. They ask for an elementary idea of the meaning of religion.

DAILY READINGS

First Week, First Day: What Is Religion?

That they should seek God, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain even of your own poets have said,

For we are also his offspring.

Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and device of man.—Acts 17: 27-29.

Religion is life. It is human life seeking God. It is not primarily a discussion. *It is an instinct in our nature pressing beyond the visible world.* This instinct for God springs from the most fundamental elements within us. It is one of the most persistent things in human history. It was not created by priests or theologians any more than flowers are created by botanists. The flower was before the botanist and religion was before the minister or the theologian. We seek God because we are what we are. As a human race

we cannot help ourselves. Everything finds its progressive life and destiny through a relationship with something else, which is the counterpart of its own life. The fish thrives in the water and dies when taken out of it. And man finds himself in his relationship with the unseen. This is the message of history, it is the testimony of experience in the most vivid zone of human consciousness. We are conscious of a capacity for what is beyond the seen, and no intellectual or other difficulty can permanently silence our fundamental persistent instincts.

But belief in God has always been difficult for some people. Why?

First Week, Second Day: The Difficulty of Belief

Jehovah reigneth; let the earth rejoice;
Let the multitude of isles be glad.
Clouds and darkness are round about him:
Righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.—Psalm 97: 1, 2.

The writers of the Bible took belief in God for granted. It was the center of their thought and life and outlook. But they encountered clouds and darkness in their believing. Their faith was tried. It could not have been faith if it had not been severely tested. To sum up Browning's interpretation in "Christmas Eve and Easter Day": Faith may be God's touchstone; God does not reward us with Heaven because we see the sun shining, nor crown a man victor because he draws his breath duly. For many minds belief in God has great difficulties in an age of triumphant science, and in a period of universal tragedy. No one who sympathetically tries to understand the modern mental struggle can make light of the many aspects of difficulty of belief in God. And yet perhaps the most remarkable aspect of modern intellectual difficulty has been stated by Professor Hoffding of Copenhagen: "It is not so much the results at which science is arriving, or has arrived, which bring about the quarrel between science and religion, and *condition* the religious problem; but rather the whole trend of ideas, the entire habit of mind which empirical science has fostered in those who have developed under its influence." *The supreme difficulty is not this or that point, but a habit of mind which remains*

when this or that point has been dealt with. Are the habits of our mind favorable to the solution of difficulty in belief?

What have been the difficulties in the way of belief in our own lives?

First Week, Third Day: The Difficulty of Unbelief

Then Jehovah answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said,

Who is this that darkeneth counsel
By words without knowledge?
Gird up now thy loins like a man;
For I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.
Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?
Declare, if thou hast understanding.
Who determined the measures thereof, if thou knowest?
Or who stretched the line upon it?
Whereupon were the foundations thereof fastened?
Or who laid the corner-stone thereof.—Job 38: 1-6.

Belief has difficulties. *But are not the difficulties of unbelief greater?* The problem of difficulty was not solved for Tolstoi when he entered upon a period of skepticism. He realized that he went from comparative difficulty to superlative difficulty. For him unbelief not only robbed the universe of rationality, but it paralyzed his human enthusiasm. "I need only to be aware of God to live, I need only to forget Him or disbelieve in Him and I die. To know God and to live is one and the same thing. God is life. Live seeking God and then you will not live without God."

That which we all recognize to be of the highest worth in life loses its value without God behind all. Mr. Balfour in his Gifford Lecture contends that if we would maintain the value of our highest beliefs and emotions we must find for them a sufficient origin. "Beauty must be more than an accident. The source of morality must be moral. The source of knowledge must be rational." Which is more rational: to surrender to the difficulties of belief or of unbelief?

On which side do we encounter the greater difficulties?

First Week, Fourth Day: The Attitude of Doubt

Now when John heard in the prison the works of the

Christ, he sent by his disciples and said unto him, Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and tell John the things which ye hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall find no occasion of stumbling in me.—Matt. 11: 2-6.

With some, doubt is an attitude of intellectual adventure, with quite inadequate mental equipment for the experiment. They are like an inexperienced boy stranded on the road to the metropolis, who has slipped away from home without the ability to make his way; his pride will not let him return. He has neither a home nor a destination. *There are others, unfortunately, to whom doubt is a place of refuge from an uncomfortable moral challenge.* Doubt is welcomed as a relief. It is sought as an end in itself. The mind ceases to be open.

There are various kinds of doubt, and a variety of motives which prompt doubt. The passage of Scripture quoted above illustrates the highest kind of motive. The doubter in this instance hated to doubt, but for the moment he felt driven to it. It was caused by a misunderstanding, but the motive was right. He did not glory in his doubt. He was distressed by it. He longed to believe. His attitude was honest, earnest, inquiring. Browning says: "If you desire faith, then you've faith enough." At any rate, doubt that strives to get beyond doubting is on the open road to knowledge.

Is my doubt a courageous attempt to reach the highest truth?

First Week, Fifth Day: The First Step—A Sense of Need

But when he came to himself he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight: I am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But while he was yet afar off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.—Luke 15: 17-20.

The way to God is through some *sense* of need. We all have the *need,* because it is part of our nature. The difference between some men and others is not that their fundamental needs are so different; it is rather that some know what their needs are and others do not. Some know, and some do not know, what is the matter with them. Some know that they cannot get what they need in the depths of their being except from God. Others are trying consciously or unconsciously to get the satisfaction they crave everywhere else than in God. And it takes a long time for very many to find out just what it *is* for which their nature is craving, and just where to go in order to get it. The supreme fundamental questions for us all are (1) What are our deepest needs? and (2) Where are these needs to be satisfied? It is a long story of disillusionment before most of us definitely face these two questions.

But until something forces us to realize that "our souls are restless till they find their rest" in God, our interest in religion is likely to be a superficial affair. Is there not something in our lives which is creating a deepened sense of need, a new responsibility, a difficult decision, a sense of shortcoming, the guileless request of a child for light?

First Week, Sixth Day: Mental Seriousness

And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question, trying him: Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law? And he said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment.—Matt. 22: 35-38.

"With all my mind." Mental seriousness is a condition of reality in religion. The quest for God *demands* the same mental attention as other pursuits *command.* And when there is a real sense of fundamental need for God, that sense of need will focus the mental interest, and deepen it. George J. Romanes, the brilliant scientist, illustrates this attitude of mental seriousness in his search for God. When he accepted evolution as a scientific dogma, he thought he must abandon his religious faith, and he withdrew his youthful book on prayer. But the question of a personal God was not closed for him. He maintained his attitude of deep seriousness, and

discovered that he had made false conclusions in the realm of religion from physical scientific premises. He came back to belief in God with a complete mental seriousness and candor, having realized that he had been altogether too dogmatic outside his scientific sphere. The story of his intellectual struggle is revealed in the book, "Thoughts on Religion," edited by Bishop Gore.

Do I know the meaning of mental seriousness as a principle in living? Am I willing to see this matter of doubt through in the spirit of seriousness?

First Week, Seventh Day: Moral Seriousness

And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and said unto him, Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, He is gone in to lodge with a man that is a sinner. And Zacchæus stood, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have wrongfully exacted aught of any man, I restore fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, To-day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost.—Luke 19: 5-10.

We mean here by moral seriousness the constant willingness to follow light at any price—to be ready, if need be, to decide and act immediately. Jacob was morally serious when he went forward to meet Esau. Great literature reveals supreme moments in which men create a crisis through heroically breaking away from accumulations of unreality in their lives. A man may crowd the moral reality of years into an hour of decision. In that courageous hour the fog is dispelled from the mental outlook, and new enthusiasms stir the soul. Many have become conscious of God through immediate obedience to light without coquetting with consequences.

Let us remember there is a mental seriousness which is not always associated with moral seriousness. They ought to go together. Because such is not invariably the case, it is disappointing in life sometimes to find mental ability associated with moral cowardice, the result being that the mental vision is narrowed. For what we see depends a great deal

on our own readiness to put everything we have into the game of life.

Where moral seriousness exists the mind is not only serious—it is reverent, and teachable. And reverence gives distinction and penetration to the intellect. Let us therefore seek God with our whole personality, and in this attitude we shall see farthest.

Can we do this?

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

I

Let us try to follow the road along which a thoughtful person of the twentieth century sometimes travels to a belief in God. And let us bear in mind, while it may not be the way by which we have come, it is not an imaginary path. While the facts may not all have come out of one experience, they are still facts from life.

First of all then, this person for some time previously had been shedding his former belief. It may be that his mind had been overloaded in earlier years with a lot of things which he accepted implicitly as all equally necessary to a real faith. As a student of the thought of his time, he had been quietly dropping one after another of those ideas; and he was tempted to think that since so much was unnecessary, or absolutely false, therefore everything must go. That is the way in a panic, whether it is in the realm of ideas or in finance. So his reading, the movement of his mind, his mental environment, tended to urge him to sell out practically all his religious beliefs and to sell very cheaply. Many people do this; they feel uncertain, then proceed to let everything go. However, this man called a halt. He found he could not go on long without some grip upon the universe of which he was a part.

In the second place, he had become keenly aware of deeper needs in his life. He was possessed by a depressing solitude of spirit. A certain sense of aimlessness haunted his efforts —a tragic consciousness of dissatisfaction—a poignant feeling of personal unworthiness, and of inability to help others in their nobler longings. All these gave him not only a new mental seriousness, but a new impatience with an attitude of mere doubting. The needs of his life must get him some-

where beyond doubting. He found that the road to belief in God had very real difficulties, but also that unbelief as an alternative was far worse. And there the battle was fought for a time, back and forth like the ebb and flow of a tide.

Third, he gradually discovered that the deepened sense of need in his life had powerfully affected his mental outlook. That outlook became greatly changed from the time in which he merely played with the intellectual aspect of religious problems. He found that the mere intellectualist was only half a man, because the man who was living merely in the domain of thought, and not also of life, could not see truth accurately or proportionately. His moral needs had automatically affected his mental processes. He realized that his mental outlook was like looking through a telescope—it had several lenses, and it had various possible focuses—and that these conditions were determined by elements in personality deeper than thought; that what one's eyes saw was according to the quality and condition, the number and focus of the lenses of the telescope through which one mentally looked.

As the sense of the deepest needs of his life grew, the focus of his intellectual perceptions had changed, and changed very greatly, and changed very quietly. The change in mental outlook was not wrought by discussion, but by a change of focus in the elements of his being. So that he fell on this important discovery—that the condition of his entire personality profoundly and unconsciously affected his mental vision, and that in order to get the highest knowledge on the highest realities in the universe he must live as well as think. He must live heroically as well as think heroically. He must be reverent as well as daring. In this temper he realized that his former mere intellectuality was itself lacking in reasonableness because it faced a problem for which it had not the ability. He had tried to study the constellations with only one lens in his telescope.

II

But now, seeking anew for God with the earnest purpose of his whole personality, he found in the world outside of himself, first of all, that sane men and women testified to knowing God, and to knowing Him in the most vivid zone of their consciousness. And, like Descartes, they could not

get away from trusting the reliability of their consciousness. He saw that history was human experience crystallized, and that human experience testified to the sense of God being a supreme human fact. He realized also that history is related to human experience as physical science is related to the facts of the world, and that therefore the message of history must be listened to in this matter. And when a scientific mind like the late William James gathered the testimony of God-conscious men and women into his book on "Varieties of Religious Experience," he felt that he was face to face with facts as real as those which a physical scientist gathered from nature.

Second, *as his own moral sense of need grew more vivid, he became profoundly aware of the presence of a moral obligation within him.* He was conscious of being in the grasp of an obligation to be, and to do, and not to do, which drew him out beyond himself, beyond society, to a Presence. And that was not only his own experience. As a student of life and literature he found that great literature depicted men who were deeply conscious of moral obligations as reaching out into the unseen for solace, help, forgiveness. Those who have been the true prophets in literature have invariably interpreted the human sense of moral obligation as the movement of the human spirit towards its moral creator. *They have depicted the intuitive human search for God as personality seeking personality,* as moral need crying out for the source of its satisfaction and renewal.

"It is from the intense consciousness of our own real existence as persons that the conception of reality takes its rise in our minds. It is through that consciousness alone that we can raise ourselves to the faintest image of the supreme reality of God," says Mansel in his third Bampton Lecture.

Further, this seeker for God also saw that "the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork." He not only found his own moral nature leading him out to the moral creator of it, but he saw that his own power of reasoning could understand the mind which is expressed in the laws of the physical world, and that consequently the rationality in himself and in nature must have a common origin behind nature. *The mind that can see mind in the phenomena of nature demands mind as the first cause of both.* Like Kepler sweeping the heavens

with his telescope, he could say of God, "I am thinking Thy thoughts after Thee." It was idle to say that evolution explained all, for evolution is only a method of doing things. Evolution is only a secondary cause, but a second cause is not an answer to the instinctive human quest for a First Cause. And it does not matter how far in time you spread out secondary causes, the mind goes back of them all for a primary cause that is sufficient for such rational effects. *When the rationality that is in man is able to read the rationality that is in nature, as one reads a book, it points to a rationality behind both. And when that is taken in conjunction with the moral nature, and instinct, and experience of man, the ultimate reality behind all phenomena becomes interpretable as God.*

At last there came to our inquiring friend a personal sureness of God—not, indeed, a knowledge of God as he is, but a certain awareness of God which is, and ever has been, possible for those who seek after him. In the nature of the case, he could not know much concerning him, through the venture of the finite seeking to comprehend the infinite. But he was sure that there is a God. He was conscious of a moral presence, and that is much. It is the difference between light and darkness. It is the difference between hope and despair. That is much, but it is not enough. Just as in this world the sun proclaims the time of day, yet in order to live in the world as we find it, in order to meet its demands and engagements, we are dependent upon instruments which bring down the time with exactness to meet our needs, so while it is a glorious fact to know that there is a God, we are dependent upon God's revelation of himself in order to get the knowledge and help of God into our finite lives and to get our bearings in our human and divine relations. That is just what many lack. *They believe in God. They are in a real sense sure of God, but the message of the Infinite has not yet been translated to the needs of their hearts.* The man who has come to believe in God has much. But he has not all that he needs. He has not a sufficient message for his own life or for other lives. He may have ideals, and try hard to live up to them. He has a sense of God, and a reverent readiness to do His will as far as he sees it. But he has a feeling that there is still much more divine light, and warmth, and power that should be his. This is where

very many people stand religiously. They believe in God and are trying to be true to him. They struggle on bravely with great questions unanswered, deep needs unsatisfied, and large opportunities unused. They are genuine men and women and have a sense of God. But their knowledge is not clear, full, rich; it does not reach and answer the fundamental cravings of the human heart. It is like the beginnings of the recognition of electricity, or of wireless communication. It is vague, uncertain. There is something there, men say. But it has not yet been definitely brought into the service of humanity. Benjamin Franklin with his kite recognizing the fact of electricity is one thing; the lighting, heating, and driving of factories by electricity is another thing. So there is an elemental knowledge of God and that knowledge which springs from taking advantage of the highest revelation of him.

CHAPTER II

Recognizing the Highest Light upon God

DAILY READINGS

Second Week, First Day: The Insufficiency of the Independent Search for God

Should not the multitude of words be answered?
And should a man full of talk be justified?
Should thy boastings make men hold their peace?
And when thou mockest, shall no man make thee ashamed?
For thou sayest, My doctrine is pure,
And I am clean in thine eyes.
But O that God would speak,
And open his lips against thee,
And that he would show thee the secrets of wisdom!
For he is manifold in understanding.
Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth.
Canst thou by searching find out God?
Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?—Job 11: 2-7.

Suppose an electrical inventor were to assume to ignore all that has taken place in electrical invention, he could not go far in his work for the practical benefit of the world. Suppose an architect were to ignore all the great architectural movements, he could not be of the highest service. The man who refused to use roads because they were old, and inglorious battles had been fought upon them, insisting upon making his own roads, would not have sufficient reason for his originality. And in religion men must take account of the fact that God has been revealing himself, and such revelation is in answer to human need. *The history of religion cannot*

be ignored, especially the highest expressions of it, where it definitely professes to meet the fundamental needs of human nature. A man therefore takes his own guesses far more seriously in this respect than he dare in literature or invention or science, if he ignores the historical story of religion, and ventures to evolve his own. I suspect this is the position which Mr. H. G. Wells has taken in his brilliant and candid book, "God the Invisible King." *But I also suspect that if Mr. Wells had not unconsciously borrowed from the Christian consciousness of his time, it would not have been so easy for him to clothe his "Finite God" with the qualities with which he endows him.* Even while he may repudiate the religious findings of the world about him, he cannot psychologically get away from making them part of the framework for his new venture. Can we dispense with the recognition of progress in any field, and especially in that one which deals with the highest equipment of character?

Second Week, Second Day: God Revealed Himself

Because that which is known of God is manifest in them; for God manifested it unto them. For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse.—Rom. 1: 19, 20.

"Two things there are," said Kant, "that fill me with awe—the starry heavens above me, and the moral law within me." Since the First Cause of the universe is a rational and moral personality, then he must express his life according to the content of his being. Every living thing expresses itself. Life means self-expression. And in manifesting himself he must necessarily ever completely transcend all the expressions of himself. Principal Cairo insisted that pantheism deified the finite world, for it locked God into his world; while deism locked God out of his world, and, as Professor Seth observed, has thereby made God finite, "a more or less ornamental appendage in the scheme of things." That God is above his world is proclaimed by the highest historical religious sense, while his presence in the world is inevitable from the very fact of his transcendence. His universe is the expression of him. There is a progressive movement in the

self-revelation of God. He has revealed himself in nature and in human nature. And we cannot get the message from God for man except as we put the emphasis upon the message that comes through man.

"No longer half akin to brute,
For all we thought and loved and did,
And hoped, and suffer'd, is but seed
Of what in them is flower and fruit;

Whereof the man, that with me trod
This planet was a noble type,
Appearing ere the times were ripe,
That friend of mine who lives in God,

That God which ever lives and loves,
One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event
To which the whole creation moves."
—Tennyson: "In Memoriam."

Second Week, Third Day: God Revealed Himself According to Human Capacity

Now there was a certain man in Cæsarea, Cornelius by name, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always. He saw in a vision openly, as it were about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in unto him, and saying to him, Cornelius. And he, fastening his eyes upon him, and being affrighted, said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are gone up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and fetch one Simon, who is surnamed Peter: he lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side.—Acts 10: 1-6.

We sometimes hear an intelligent person say, "One religion is as good as another religion, at least for the people who are brought up in it." Of course, I cannot agree. And that person would not carry out his idea in things outside of religion. He believes in sending a better sanitary system, and modern agricultural implements, and scientific medicine, to the Oriental countries. Why? Because these things answer

their needs better than the things they have been using for a thousand years. Our race apparently has a genius for that sort of thing, and we should give the needs of the world the benefit of it. Exactly. And in the same way, one race and many individuals in it have had a genius for sensing the revelations of God, like attuned receivers of wireless messages. And those messages are what individuals and races need. They do not realize it to be the thing they need, not at first, any more than a town in inland China may realize at first the need for scientific sanitation, even while it suffers from a smallpox epidemic. The superiority of one religion over another lies in the measure in which contains the larger, fuller message of God to the fundamental needs of mankind. Is any less than the best good enough? Are we prepared to receive the highest light without prejudice, and are we also willing to communicate it?

Second Week, Fourth Day: God Revealed Down Through the Centuries

And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I am that I am: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I am hath sent me unto you. And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, Jehovah, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations. Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, Jehovah, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, hath appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt.—Ex. 3: 13-16.

The counterpart of the story of man seeking God is the story of God revealing himself to man. We cannot ignore the story of that revelation of God any more than we can ignore the story of the progress of anything else as it reaches up to the needs of mankind at this moment. Who would try to begin the story of English literature or of art all over again? There may have been blunders and failures in

those stories, but we ignore the blunders and make use of the highest achievements. Everything in the world of today that is helping man has a more or less long history of failure and success, and we enter into the fruits of the toil and experience of those who have brought printing, lighting, food, machinery, and thousands of other things right up to date for our immediate human needs. *We cannot make the knowledge of God an exception to this reasonable procedure. God has been revealing himself to men through the ages.* And that story is of immense value in the living of life. There have been false ideas incorporated into the progressive revelations, but that does not make the truth ineffective.

You will find a mixture of error and truth in geography, physiology, and in every other department of thought. *It simply demonstrates that it takes time for men to comprehend things as they are.* And therefore the revelation of God to human need is a long story gradually unfolded to the comprehension of the times. *Have we responded to the progressive divine revelation, or are we living religiously in a former age, while we live in other things in the twentieth century?*

Second Week, Fifth Day: The Supreme Revelation

God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds; who being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; having become by so much better than the angels, as he hath inherited a more excellent name than they.—Heb. 1: 1-4.

If God has been progressively revealing himself, then we look for a highest revelation. There are supreme examples in painting, literature, architecture, and in every other human pursuit. No man can be interested in English literature and ignore Shakespeare. *There must be a supreme revelation of God, and whoever is interested in knowing God must be interested in the supreme revelation of him.* And it is of far

more consequence that we should be interested in the supreme revelation of God than in any other subject, because it has to do with the living of life. It is a part of the whole question of the highest fulfilment of our destiny. We owe this interest not only to ourselves, but to our family relationships, to our associations with the world, to our tasks in life. It is not merely a question of our own mood toward the subject. It is a question of relating ourselves to the highest God has revealed in order to be at our best to our fellow men. Our concern to bring our best contribution to the life of a changing world, is vitally connected with a definite interest in the supreme revelation of God to man. Why is the "good" called "the enemy of the best"? Do we live in the spirit of desiring the highest?

Second Week, Sixth Day: Who Is the Supreme Revelation of God?

Now when Jesus came into the parts of Cæsarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Who do men say that the Son of man is? And they said, Some say John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.—Matt. 16: 13-16.

If that question were put to the wisest, the best, and the most useful, as well as to the great masses of the people, there would be an almost unanimous answer. As the supreme revelation of God, Jesus Christ has no competitor, according to the judgment of the most diverse and opposite types of men. Jesus Christ as a supreme revelation is definitely and vividly before the minds of vast numbers of people as the highest, clearest vision of the character of God, and as the ideal of human character.

Some writers, like J. M. Robertson and Drews, venture to doubt that Jesus Christ ever existed. But such men do not face the fact that the portrait of Jesus could not have been drawn out of the human imagination by the combined skill, or genius, of the entire first or second century. They also evade the fact that a great movement like the Christian Church could spring only from a supreme personality, not to say a

single word about the historicity of the Christian records. Jesus Christ is ineffaceably before the human mind. He is part of the consciousness of the world. *What is it in Jesus which so completely compels such homage?*

Second Week, Seventh Day: Why is Jesus Christ the Supreme Revelation of God?

Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.—Matt. 11: 28-30.

Jesus Christ is the supreme revelation of God. Not because it is dogmatically asserted that he is, but because he answers the fundamental needs of human nature. He professes to do this, and multitudes have testified that he has done it. What are the fundamental needs of human nature? Here are some of them: (1) A satisfying vision of God. (2) A sense of divine forgiveness. (3) Divine companionship and guidance in daily living. (4) Power in order to turn the antagonistic facts of life into personal victorious strength and progress. (5) A motive in the living of life which shall be sufficient to guarantee personal growth, industrious enterprise, consistent with the rights of others and the progress of the world. (6) A hope for the future which reconciles the human spirit to supreme trial in the present, bringing the inspiration of the eternal into the duties of the passing hour. (7) A program for the renewal of the world, the renewal of the spirit of the individual being the means of social cohesion. (8) All of these, not merely any one of them alone, but together focused in a divine presence, and communicated to lives, not academically, but by the impartation of a new spirit.

These are some of the fundamental needs of human nature arrived at by an appeal to experience. And where experience has not been wholly successful in appropriating what Christ has to give, there is the intuitive sense that it is from no lack of sufficiency in Christ. It is that conviction which makes hopefulness for the life of tomorrow possible. *Do you recognize any really fundamental human need which Christ does not answer?*

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

I

I have before me a number of written statements from students regarding Jesus Christ as the supreme revelation of God. These statements are honest difficulties. But every one of them deals with something which is not essential to the heart of the matter. They are difficulties arising largely out of centuries of interpretation, and created by confusion of mind regarding emphasis upon one point or another which is not vital to the problem. Keeping in mind the points raised by those students, let me try to face a few central questions. I cannot possibly even begin to answer them in the space at my disposal, but will merely try to indicate a way of approach to the personality of our Lord.

In what way may we comprehend Jesus Christ as divine?

(1) He was divine in the absolute completeness of the identification of his mind with the mind of God, of his heart with the love of God, and of his will with the will of God. He revealed God on the human plane. He focused the essence of the character of God in human life.

(2) He was divine in the absolute completeness of his identification with fundamental human need. He interpreted the human spirit in its depths. He reached beneath the racial, the geographical, the sexual, the superficial, and the accidental differences, and answered the universal and abiding cravings of human nature.

(3) He was divine in that he conquered every obstacle that stood in the way of his bringing the sufficiency of God to the willing and responsive human heart. He brought the love, the holiness, the forgiveness, and the power of God right up to the threshold of individual need.

(4) He was divine in that he survived physical death, and his living spirit became the creative center of Christian character. Men and women who had known him before his physical death continued to know him in a far deeper and more effective way as a spiritual presence. We cannot get away from this fact. If Jesus Christ as an actual, spiritual, personal Presence had not continued to be real to his followers after his physical death, there would have been no Christianity as an historical fact in the world. The spiritual presence of Jesus Christ was as real to those early disciples

as anything else in the world. That is not a theory, it is an indisputable fact in human experience, verified from the profound sureness of sane men and women of the abiding Presence.

II

What is the heart of Christianity? What is the point of contact between Christianity and human need? Is it the sermon on the mount, or is it Jesus' view of God, or is it Jesus as an ideal, or is it the acceptance of a certain statement of belief regarding Jesus, or is it something else? Let us fasten upon this, for we are at a point that must be clearly understood. A great deal of confusion arises just here. Is our relation to Jesus Christ that of a traveler to an actual guide and companion? What is the heart of Christianity? Who is to be the judge as to the true answer to this question? It seems to me this is not a question as to what you think or what I think. The question should be answered by an appeal to the history of Christian experience. When we turn to the first followers of Christ, we find that the heart of Christianity for them consisted in an actual relationship to the spiritual presence of their Master who had survived death. Their Christianity was primarily a deep spiritual fellowship with a Master who had passed beyond physical limitations to a spiritual leadership which transcended space. And they actually knew him far better, and they knew his aims and purposes far better, in their purely spiritual relationship to him, than they did in the days of his flesh. This is historical fact, pure and simple. For suppose that Jesus after his death had not become an actual spiritual presence to those early disciples, what would have happened? There would have been no New Testament, there would have been no Christian Church. The followers of Jesus would have gone away back to their fishing and their other occupations, with hallowed memories in their disillusioned lives. It was the dominating presence of the Spirit of Christ renewing their lives, giving them new spiritual experiences, out of which the literature of the Testament was born. *Without the creative presence of the living Christ energizing and illumining willing men, the story of the sermon on the mount, the teaching of Jesus, the incidents of his human career would never have been recorded.* Christianity did not exist as an

experience and a testimony, as a church, and as a literature until the spiritual presence of Jesus Christ mastered and illumined the lives of his disciples. This was not merely the view of any one apostle, it was the supreme fact behind the full sweep of apostolic life and work. The centrality of the living Spirit of Christ has been the supreme secret in the lives of saints, martyrs, and missionaries. It has been the triumphant fact in hymns and devotional literature which have been the inspiration of the Church for centuries. So that the heart of Christianity in the light of history is the spiritual presence of Jesus Christ. The Jesus of history has fulfilled the conditions and has won the place of the spiritual leadership of the human race. We are accustomed to the idea of those who win places of leadership in every department of corporate enterprise, and we approach the various situations of life through those leaders. We are glad to recognize them and give them honor and to meet their demands. Lo, God has exalted Jesus Christ to be the Living Mediator in bringing God to man and in bringing man to God.

III

Where must one begin in seeking to know Jesus Christ? One does not necessarily begin by accepting, by believing, all that a mature Christian may believe. It seems to me a great injury has been done to many people by forcing upon their acceptance much that may be true enough, and necessary enough, later on. But to insist upon it as necessary at the beginning of the Christian life does incalculable harm. If nature moves upwards from the simple to the complex, why should it not be so in the natural history of Christian belief? If Jesus said: "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now," may we not say it? It is surely common sense that one who has been following Christ for twenty or thirty years believes more than one who is just starting. And therefore when a mature Christian tries to point the way to a seeker, he will not insist upon the seeker's accepting as necessary all that an experienced disciple believes. It is because this principle has not been sufficiently recognized that there are so many heart-breaking difficulties in the minds of large numbers of people in regard to Christian belief.

Christian truth is not all on the same level of immediate importance. Christianity has primary truth, and truth which is the outgrowth of primary truth. It is not necessary to accept this secondary truth, before it has become real to you through the acceptance and growth of primary truth. There is one central creative reality in Christianity. And from association with the living spirit of Christ, who is that creative center, other Christian truths spring, as apples grow on a healthy apple tree. But some have been told they must have the apples on the tree even before the blossoms have had time to appear, which is very discouraging.

But have we definitely tried to find a way of approach to Jesus Christ, and are we continuing?

CHAPTER III

How is Christ Made Real to Us?

DAILY READINGS

Third Week, First Day: The Testimony of the New Testament Regarding Jesus Christ

Ye search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me; and ye will not come to me, that ye may have life. —John 5: 39, 40.

We all feel that we know certain characters because we have read of them. That is all we know of some great souls whose personalities haunt us. We read and reread the story of their lives, and we know them better than some people we meet every day. The New Testament reveals to us the personality of Jesus Christ. One among many differences between the New Testament and other biographies is that while other books close with the physical death of their heroes, the New Testament continues the story of the activity and enterprise, through the lives of men, of the Spirit of Jesus Christ after his physical death. *It is unfortunate that when some people read the New Testament for a view of Christ they become involved in discussion over some detail in the story and lose sight of the presence behind the story.* Of course, there is a real place for criticism. But is it not greatly overdone? I went to an art exhibition on one occasion with a very brilliant artist, and his art criticism was so keen and interesting and incessant that my imagination did not get much opportunity to receive the message of the pictures. The New Testament is a portrait of a supreme personality. It is a hint, a clue, a suggestion, a revelation. Therefore, it is the impression it gives as a whole with which we are concerned in the first instance. The New Testament in detail presents problems hard to solve. But there is enough

of a general impression of Christ as a person to lead us on from the portrait in the Scriptures to him who is greater than the portrait. If we wish to get a vivid view of a picture, we do not stand too close to it. We do not look at the brush work with a microscope. The artistic judge who awards the prize may have to do that, but it is not the task of the plain man. Sterne says in "Tristram Shandy":

"And how did Garrick speak the soliloquy last night?—Oh, against all rule, my Lord,—most ungrammatically! betwixt the substantive and the adjective, which should agree together in number, case, and gender, he made a breach thus,—stopping, as if the point wanted settling;—and betwixt the nominative case, which your lordship knows should govern the verb, he suspended his voice in the epilogue a dozen times three seconds and three fifths by a stop-watch, my Lord, each time.—Admirable grammarian!—But in suspending his voice —was the sense suspended likewise? Did no expression of attitude or countenance fill up the chasm?—Was the eye silent? Did you narrowly look?—I looked only at the stop-watch, my Lord.—Excellent observer!"

In our relation to the New Testament are we merely critical or are we looking for a presence? Have we ever given the Jesus of the gospels a real chance to make his own impression upon us?

Third Week, Second Day: The Testimony of Christians Regarding Jesus Christ

That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life (and the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us); that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you also, that ye also may have fellowship with us: yea, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.—I John 1: 1-3.

The testimony of straightforward men as witnesses has always had a powerful influence with an honest jury. The frank statement of a witness has many a time smashed the sophistries of an attorney. *And it is upon the witness that*

Christ has always rested his case. "Ye are my witnesses." Some of the most exalted souls who ever lived on this planet, some of the most intellectually acute, some of the most experienced in life, some of the most radically changed, have borne their witness that they actually knew Jesus Christ. They testified not merely to their belief that he once lived on the earth, or that they accepted his teaching, but they affirmed that his real presence changed their lives—that he was their comrade on the open road. This declaration has come not only from men and women of the first century, but from transfigured lives through all the centuries from that day to this. And this testimony has issued from the most hallowed hours and scenes. It has been uttered in the midst of life's supreme trials. It has been whispered in farewells. It has leapt from the souls of men who had been broken, and restored by the healing presence. It has been the secret of tens of thousands of romantic sacrifices. It has been the conviction expressed by strong fathers when lads have gone out from home to fight the great fight. Let us not forget that this message from historical Christian experience is one of the great facts in the life of the world, even at this present moment. As Browning declares:

> "That one Face, far from vanish, rather grows,
> Or decomposes but to recompose,
> Become my universe that feels and knows."

What is the peculiar value of such testimony?

Third Week, Third Day: Jesus Christ Made Real Through Lives Which Suggest Him

Now when they beheld the boldness of Peter and John, and had perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. And seeing the man that was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.—Acts 4: 13, 14.

There are few influences which act more powerfully upon the human personality than suggestion. It rouses the will. It inspires emotion. The sight of his country's flag in a foreign land stirs the soul of a homesick traveler. Suggestion led the imagination of Newton up to the idea of universal

gravitation. It is not only the inspiration of science, it is the soul of art.

In the same way, those who have known Jesus Christ and have entered into companionship with him, unconsciously suggest him to others. Something that has come from Christ shining through a character suggests the living Master. It may be a very small thing, nothing more than a look, a tone of voice, or it may be the atmosphere which a person carries. It may be the shining of some grace like patience, or humility, or sacrifice, or purity, or courage. And the effect of seeing it is to drive the mind to Jesus Christ. I saw a man once for a few minutes more than twenty years ago and I never think of him but Christ looms up behind the vision of that man. The actual visible form of Christ behind the figure of Phillips Brooks on Copley Square in Boston may not appeal to us. But the idea is sound. I am sure that very many people came to believe in the actual spiritual presence of the Master through the personality, not to speak of the preaching, of Phillips Brooks. I have heard more than one man confess that his faith in Christ was retained through periods of storm and stress by the divine suggestiveness of a parent's life. Have we given the suggestion of Christ through human lives the place in our life which we give the suggestion of other things?

Third Week, Fourth Day: Christ Made Real Through Personal Test

And they come to Jericho: and as he went out from Jericho, with his disciples and a great multitude, the son of Timæus, Bartimæus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the way side. And when he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. And many rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried out the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood still, and said, Call ye him. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good cheer: rise, he calleth thee. And he, casting away his garment, sprang up, and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered him, and said, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? And the blind man said unto him, Rabboni, that I may receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made

thee whole. And straightway he received his sight, and followed him in the way.—Mark 10: 46-52.

This blind man had heard of Jesus, but of course had never seen him. He had enough evidence, however, from others to put Jesus to the test, with the result that the testimony of others was changed into a personal experience which verified the testimony as true.

We are constantly putting reports regarding people and things to the proof by a personal venture. It is the way we live, it is the way of progress. If we did not do this, we would never make any new friends, we would not expand our relationships with anything. Our world would become smaller, and not larger. A great deal of testimony is not necessary in order to try out something for ourselves. When some one tells us of another person he thinks can help us in some perplexity, the testimony may be very slender and unsatisfactory, but we say: "Let us try and see what comes of it." After that venture we give our opinion of the worth of the testimony.

In the same way, there is first of all a testimony regarding Christ, then there is a personal experience of him. Testimony is a temporary basis for faith, while personal experience is the permanent basis for faith.

There are two questions for us to answer to our own satisfaction. The first question is: "Is there enough testimony regarding Jesus Christ to put him to the proof?" The second question is: "Is my need sore enough to compel me to make the experiment?"

Third Week, Fifth Day: Christ Made Real Through the Eclipse of Other Things

Martha therefore said unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. And even now I know that, whatsoever thou shalt ask of God, God will give thee. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die. Believest thou this? She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I have believed that thou art

the Christ, the Son of God, even he that cometh into the world.—John 11: 21-27.

While living in Lausanne for a brief period some years ago, I found that in the glorious view from my window there were villages on the French side of the Lake of Geneva nestling at the foot of the Savoy Mountains, which I could see only on dull days. In the bright sunshine they were invisible. So there are dark days in human experience in which the presence of Christ becomes marvelously real. We sometimes hear in these tragic days severely academic philosophers say that through stern concrete facts they are seeing realities never comprehended by study.

I have known a brilliant agnostic who, passing through a certain experience, suddenly realized Jesus Christ as a presence with a simplicity and clearness that reminded me at once of the experience of Saul of Tarsus.

Life is a great revealer. It readjusts our emphasis. It gives a new proportion to the intellect in its relation to the rest of personality. It suffuses the mind with a new light from the deeper elements of our being. Some things which had stood in the foreground of our concern and ambition are suddenly thrown into the shade without any discussion. Nobody had spoken, there was no argument, but the whole scene of life was changed and rearranged. Things that had been terribly real became almost unreal, while a Presence that had been unreal became a glorious and dominating and comforting reality. At what times in my life has Jesus Christ seemed most real to me?

Third Week, Sixth Day: Christ Made Real Through Concern for Others

And behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue: and he fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought him to come into his house; for he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she was dying. But as he went the multitudes thronged him.—Luke 8: 41, 42.

Have you ever observed how some men change and soften in their religious attitude when the spiritual needs of their children begin to grip them? They had perhaps no definite

sense of need for themselves, but the questions, the problems, the longings, of helpless young lives looking to them for help, stung them into seriousness.

They could not drag those eager children through the arguments by which they had been led from confusion to confusion in the days of their early twenties. "There was a good deal of feverish unreality about it all," I have heard more than one of this type of man say, with a reminiscent look in the eyes. And since that time, life has been teaching them some things. It is in some such circumstances I can see a sobered man of thirty-five reading the story of Jesus, and then awkwardly kneeling down with his little family in the honest longing to have the Presence enlighten and protect that precious charge committed to his manly care.

I am not here making light of the days of youthful doubt, but would simply remind that lovable, eager youth of twenty with whom I have a profound sympathy, that there are other influences upon spiritual understanding besides discussion, that will some day have their place in his thoughts. When I am called upon to help others, what have I to give?

Third Week, Seventh Day: Christ Made Real Through Dispelling False Impressions

And Nathanael said unto him, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art King of Israel.—John 1: 46-49.

Nathanael heard a remarkable testimony in favor of Jesus, but he was strongly inclined to reject it instantly. The reason for this was the temptation to look at Jesus through the bad reputation of the town in which he lived.

The impulse in the mind of Nathanael was to cancel the testimony of a good man regarding Jesus through holding on to a popular prejudice. It was only as he listened to persuasion to get behind the unsavory reputation of Nazareth,

and to look squarely at Jesus as he was in Himself that the light broke upon his mind.

This is perhaps the supreme difficulty on the part of very many in our day. They are prejudiced by real or imaginary facts which stand between them and Jesus Christ. There is a tissue of preconceived false notions, of misrepresentations, of caricatures, obscuring the Master's presence.

The problem is to get behind those misleading associations, which are no more a part of Christ than the particles of dust are part of the sunbeam in which they dance. The sunbeam does not create the dust, nor can the dust contaminate the sunbeam.

So the soul of real Christianity is Christ, and Christ is not coextensive with all that is called Christian civilization, or with conventional Christianity. It is the privilege of those who have a definite experience of Christ to lead seekers beyond Nazareth to the Creative Presence. How can we clear our minds of false ideas of Jesus Christ?

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

I

The face of Christ is eclipsed for some by actual concrete historical facts which have produced prejudices. There are prejudices against the reality of Christ which have been inspired by inconsistent professing Christians and by wrangling Christian churches. The failure of organized Christianity to wipe out vice, drunkenness, and strife of all kinds from the life of Christendom has been damaging. Some practical critics judge Christ by what has issued out from professed association with him into the stream of corporate human life during these so-called Christian centuries.

The facts which inspire this prejudice are terribly true. But Christ is not to blame for them. It is a first principle in the activity of Christ that he must have the cooperation of the individual and corporate will. He cannot compel individuals to do his will. He will not, he cannot coerce men. For it is his purpose to develop souls and not to make mere chattels. Those who really know Christ, and know themselves, do not blame him for their failures. They have a deep conviction that all their shortcomings have arisen through their own indolence, cowardice, or hypocrisy. They know

that whenever they rise to his challenge, his power and purpose cooperate with their willingness to achieve victory in life. *In regard to the corporate failure of Christianity, there never has been a real and lasting large corporate historical opportunity given to Jesus Christ in the Christian centuries to unfold his program for the coming of the Kingdom of God.*

Somehow or other, as early as the sub-apostolic period, corporate Christianity began to receive a serious twist; it failed to carry out its original pattern and spirit and power. There were great souls and there were great movements. But the original corporate pattern was tampered with. The Reformation, with all its great emphasis upon forgotten truth, did not recover the whole range of the Christian order of things. The Protestant Reformation was a protest. It could not in the nature of the case grasp the entire situation and readjust it. It was a partial movement, and the trouble with much of Protestantism since then has been to make a fetish of that partial movement, instead of a starting point for a comprehensive and persistent progressive recovery of the real mind of Christ for the individual and the whole of society.

The condition of the modern world is a challenge to individuals and to the churches, to give Christ a fresh chance to live through them, to embody his program. Christ still has the power, he still has the plan for the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth, when we as individuals and churches will cease to think self and begin to think Christ and to will his will. It is that conviction which makes the thought of the future not only tolerable, but hopeful, for perhaps we are learning our lesson through our disillusions. We Christians say to the critics who have a prejudice against Christ because of the awful state of the world—it is not Christ's fault. It is the fault of the arrogance, the stupidity, the self-centered provincialism of individuals and Christian communities. "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Come and see."

II

There are prejudices against the reality of Jesus Christ because of intellectual statements concerning his personality, through which some think they must approach him, and they

cannot do it. There are men who are embarrassed by definitions, and who are alienated by a dogmatism which is altogether foreign to the experience and teaching of the men of the New Testament.

When we notice how the men of the New Testament handled the difficulties of seekers regarding their Lord, we realize that many of us are entirely on the wrong track. When Philip dealt with Nathanael, he immediately appealed to personal experience.

None of the New Testament characters made Jesus Christ their master out of a definition regarding him. Their devotion was always the result of a personal venture of faith, a personal intimacy. There is of course a place for definition, there is a place for credal statements—it may be a great place. But the present point is that we have no right dogmatically to thrust a credal statement upon any man *as a preliminary necessity.* It is not in the New Testament. It is not in the experience of the men who wrote the New Testament. The credal statement was and is the outgrowth of experience and not the creator of experience. A creed is for the mature and not for the immature. If you tell a sick man that you believe a certain physician can perform a complete cure, but that he must try the experiment for himself, you are not dogmatically demanding the acceptance of a creed regarding the doctor, you are simply urging a personal trial of him. Besides, a personal trial is a far more vital thing than the mere inactive assent to what other people have said, and then doing nothing more about it.

The testimony of the Bible, and of its great Christians, is all directed towards getting men not primarily to accept a creed, but to make a venture. When the venture has been made is time for the creed. And then that personal permanent living creed comes out of the soul's experience.

Therefore, apart from definitions, apart from all the different places of emphasis upon which one and another insist in the historical record of the human history of Jesus Christ, there is enough to put him to the proof. There is enough general evidence to make a particular venture. And after the venture one may go back and vindicate the historical record, having some real experience with which to do it. I am strongly convinced that this is the New Testament attitude.

In taking up a different attitude, we play into the hands of mere scholasticism, which tends to drag the whole question out of the realm of a personal venture and to leave it in the realm of academic discussion, for which most people have neither the ability, nor the time, nor the inclination. Hence the indifference of some to the whole matter.

I am convinced further that the men of the New Testament were concerned in the first instance only with getting their fellowmen into a personal relation with the living Christ, and not with the great truths which grew out of association with Christ. They made a clear difference between the truth that went before a Christian experience and the truth that flamed from it.

Unfortunately in our day a great many people have no such clear understanding of the Christian situation. They insist upon putting all Christian truth on the same level, to be accepted by the same person all at once, and if the seeker hesitates he is immediately under suspicion. That is not only cruel, it is treason to the way of the New Testament. In the New Testament there is only one central, creative reality and that is the living presence of Christ. All the teaching of the Epistles is an outgrowth. To insist that a man shall show his apple harvest when he is just planting his apple trees is both nonsense and tyranny. Our real creed is not made for us beforehand, it is made by the victory of the divine life working in us and through us.

III

There is another attitude which threatens the permanent estrangement of some from the living personality of Christ. Like the first disciples of Christ, on the evening of that first Good Friday, they think of him as dead and buried.

There are people who think that historical biblical criticism and an evolutionary process in the world have made a living Saviour impossible. They are sorry, but their faith has had to go. They loved that glorious vision in the days of their childish simplicity and credulity, but it has been done to death since by the learning of the world, of which they have absorbed a little here and there. They are not at all aggressive, they are quiet, hesitant, detached. They rarely speak of it, and when they do they are not harsh. Some of them

are most lovable men. Their tragic mistake is that they think learning has buried a Presence. They might be right, if belief were wholly dependent upon mere academic demonstration. But that is not even good science. For science begins with facts and not with theories. Scientific theories are evolved from the facts of nature. And so there are also Christian facts. Unfortunately they are not as plentiful as they should be, and that is the real trouble. But after all, a scientist does not require a great many specimens in nature to compel his mind. Even a very rare specimen is a fact, and that one rare specimen may throw down a previous pet scientific theory.

So in Christian things our appeal is from the merely academic to life—from the Jesus that men say was dead, to the Christ whom men say is alive. And history carries the proof of it in transfigured characters. Christian life is a fact. Behind the fact there is testimony to a Presence, and without that Presence there is no adequate explanation of the fact. If the transfigured Christian characters were only more transfigured! If there were only more of them! If they were only a mightier cohesive, redeeming, social power—then there would be more who would believe, there is no doubt about it. For even scientific minds are impressed with power and bulk, and chilled by feebleness and fewness. The supreme means, then, of convincing men of all kinds must be the reality of the Presence triumphing in and through lives, and in and through their social opportunities. Till that day comes when Jesus Christ shall have a greater chance in our lives and our churches and our social institutions, we appeal to what he has had a chance to do. We appeal to what he has done in some. We appeal to the testimony of those who know his power. We appeal for a venture from the merely academic temper to life, from theory to testimony, and from testimony to a personal test of the living Christ. There are scientific men in all departments of science who know the scientific situation and who are at the same time Christian believers. They live with Christ in the full light of scientific statement. And they do it because they are students of Christian facts as well as of theories.

CHAPTER IV

What was Jesus Christ to His First Followers?

DAILY READINGS

Fourth Week, First Day: They Saw God Focused

Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ: for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and in him ye are made full, who is the head of all principality and power.—Col. 2: 8-10.

You focus the sun's rays through a magnifying glass and start a fire. The contents of a vast library are focused into a catalogue. The policy of a nation is focused through the personality of an ambassador. Jesus Christ revealed God in a human focus. Men saw in him enough of God for their need. They were satisfied. There was no sense of the inadequacy of Christ. The inadequacy was in their power of searching the depths of the revelation that was in him.

This is what students of comparative religion as well as simple disciples of Christ discover in our day—that Christ gathers the broken, scattered revelations of God into a focused unity in himself. It is not that other religions are wholly false, it is simply that Christ makes a full-orbed, all-inclusive revelation of God, sufficient for human need. As a mattter of historical fact, every other revelation of God since has either been an echo, a dilution, or a perversion of that which is in Christ. And when we have the daylight we are independent of lesser lights.

Do we seek God where he is focused or where it is more difficult to find him?

Fourth Week, Second Day: They Saw God Simplified

Even the mystery which hath been hid for ages and generations: but now hath it been manifested to his saints, to whom God was pleased to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.—Col. 1: 26, 27.

The humble disciples of Christ actually knew more about God through Christ than Plato knew. I am not here disparaging intellectual inquiry. I am simply stating a fact. Because a child in an express train travels faster than a champion runner on foot, that is no reflection upon the runner. *So the disciples achieved more knowledge concerning God than was possessed by any type of independent speculative philosopher.* There are one or two remarkable glimpses of God in Aristotle, but there is no such adequate knowledge of God for the various aspects of life as the men of the New Testament possessed. Plato was far more blind to the sacrificial idea in life than were the disciples of Christ. The revelation of God that is in Christ comes down to ordinary human comprehension. This race for divine knowledge is not to the intellectually swift. It is true at this hour that the man who knows Christ has an actual practical knowledge by which to live, that all the purely intellectual study of a lifetime could not give him. While some brilliant men are intellectually stumbling amidst the darkness of a tempestuous night, there are far less gifted men walking confidently amidst divine realities to the conquest of life, realizing the expansion of their triumphant souls.

Do we live in that mental temper which can receive the simplified revelation of God?

Fourth Week, Third Day: They Saw God as Humanly Available

For through him we both have our access in one Spirit unto the Father. So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone; in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the

Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit.—Eph. 2: 18-22.

Many who believe in the immanence of God, in the actual presence of God everywhere, are at the same time unable to make actual connections with God. Just so at Niagara one may stand by the vast cataract and yet, in the presence of so much water, be unable to quench actual thirst. There may be power in the stream close by your house, but it is not available as electricity to give you light until the engineer sets up a transforming apparatus.

Through Jesus Christ, his disciples were immediately conscious of being brought into definite relations with the heart of God. They knew God as a Father. This knowledge is deeper than the recognition of God as the Creator of the universe, or as immanent in this world. It is a knowledge born of experience and of the very essence of reality. It is more than intellectual knowledge, and it saves the intellect from being drowned in the depths of mystery which intellect cannot fully fathom. This knowledge of God through Christ does not solve the mysteries of the universe, but it transcends them. There is a sense of having entered into a loving relationship with God as the soul of the universe, which is the heart of reality. There is a sense of being at home in the universe, notwithstanding its mysteries. There is a sense of kinship with the center of spiritual reality. And consequently there is a patient willingness to wait for light upon whatever seems to contradict trust in God.

While we recognize the nearness of God are we able to enter into relationship with him?

Fourth Week, Fourth Day: They Experienced God Within

For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory.

Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.—Col. 3: 3-5

It is one thing to admire a presence that is entirely outside of one's own life—it is quite a different thing to be possessed,

controlled, inspired, by the spirit of that presence. It is one thing to follow a guide who leads along the difficult, gloomy, uphill path. It is another thing to be inwardly possessed by a wooing, compelling presence whose spirit turns the hard road into romance and triumph.

So there was a time when the early followers of Christ simply admired him, but there was another time when the living Spirit of Christ lived within them. He ruled their hearts. His life became the life of their lives. When Jesus was physically with them, they followed him as a Master. When he was physically absent and spiritually present, he lived within them. They knew him far more intimately when he was spiritually with them than when he was physically with them. Therefore we say that *Christ revealing God within men by his indwelling presence is normal, apostolic, historical Christianity. Christ as a spiritual presence within human lives, illumining, restraining, inspiring them, is the very heart of Christianity.* It is this relationship between Christ and his followers that has made real Christianity. What has not been of this living, inner relationship could never by itself survive as Christianity.

Is our knowledge of God an inner spiritual experience or is it merely a mental assent?

Fourth Week, Fifth Day: They Experienced Forgiveness

The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, hanging him on a tree. Him did God exalt with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins. And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that obey him.—Acts 5: 30-32.

The followers of Christ believed that when he forgave them their sins they were free from guilt in the face of the whole universe. They were unafraid to live or die. They feared God, but they were not afraid of him. This sense of forgiveness did not deaden their conscience. It gave them a new moral sensitiveness. It was not a substitute for character, it was a fresh start in the pursuit of character. Unforgiven, they would have been morally broken and paralyzed men. Forgiven, they were possessed by a new zest for life. And

this experience has been verified in the lives of multitudes in our own time of the best men made better and of the worst men transformed. There is nothing in this life of which they have been surer than their moral renewal through the forgiveness of Christ.

Where in all human experience is there any such escape from moral failure into triumphant moral achievement as in the lives of those who bear witness to having accepted forgiveness from Christ? There is no story of moral restoration, of renewed enthusiasm, of recovered joy, of fresh conscious oneness with the will of God, and of humble contrition, in the whole of human literature which compares with the testimony of a believing Christian. Into what new day does Shakespeare bring Lady Macbeth? What does Victor Hugo do for Jean Valjean? Where does Hawthorne leave Arthur Dimmesdale?

Can anything take the place of the divine forgiveness in our lives?

Fourth Week, Sixth Day: They Possessed Power

And he hath said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my power is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Wherefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.—II Cor. 12: 9, 10.

The sign of power is that things happen. Things happened in and through the lives of the disciples of Christ. Read through the book of Acts with the idea in your mind of things happening, and you will be conscious of the energy of a new epoch in the life of the world. Even in reading about it, one becomes aware of being lifted into a higher spiritual realm, as a boat high and dry is floated by a rising tide.

What does it mean? It means that Christ-consciousness in those men's lives made them aware of great tasks and of great resources in achieving them. They were not so much conscious of power as conscious of Christ. Christ expressed himself through them as urging certain things to be done, with his spiritual capital behind the doing of it.

Those men knew that a command from Christ implied the ability to achieve it as hidden in the heart of the command. Triumph came not through self-consciousness, but through Christ-consciousness.

If Croesus asks you to do some expensive task for him, it is not your pocket book that is behind it, but his. And in the doing of it you do not think of your resources but his.

Is our Christianity primarily a task or power to achieve it?

Fourth Week, Seventh Day: They Found a Center for Social Unity and Progress

And when the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire; and it sat upon each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.—Acts 2: 1-4.

Through their Master the disciples not only found their own highest destiny as individuals, but they entered upon the beginnings of a new social center of unity and progress. The most potent bond was established between them, issuing from a profound common relation to Christ. Think of all the ties which have united groups of people, and consider if there ever was one which had the unifying elements of that comradeship: They had a living Leader in the deepest things of life. They rejoiced in a personal experience of those deepest things. They enjoyed a definite spiritual fellowship in those greatest of realities. They were comforted and sustained by a common outlook upon life. They were inspired towards the same ideal in service. They were united in the expectation of a coming Kingdom.

Of course, without the actual spiritual experience this bond simply does not exist, however impressively the outward form of it may be set up. Everything depends upon the reality of the inner condition. But where the spiritual regeneration has taken place, there is the seed plot of a social order, there is the hope for a new humanity. Are we making a vital contribution to such possibilities?

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

I

The followers of Jesus did not enter upon their penetrating knowledge of him all at once. There was a gradual recognition of him. They began their discipleship, some of them, as with a teacher to whom they had been introduced, perhaps with a determination not to be carried away by enthusiastic reports. Just so, many a great friendship begins in the most casual way, with no immediate promise of rich and far-reaching results.

But the appeal of his personality, plus their willingness to be open-minded and open-hearted to his influence, brought a great treasure of conviction regarding him. Even while he was still in the flesh, they had followed clues and hints that led them to awe-inspiring conclusions. It would be difficult to divide up into its various shades of color the beam of light which fell upon their souls from his presence. There were so many elements in it. It was the mixture of so much that was beyond their knowledge or dreams, issuing out from him as a conquering spiritual illumination, as a renewing atmosphere, as a compelling revelation. And when he became invisible, when his presence was wholly spiritual, there came to them a sudden increase of unearthly light upon him as to who he was and what he was. There was born in them a sense of deathless spiritual nearness and of kinship. They saw their Lord in luminous cosmic relationships to God and to the world. There flashed in upon them a dazzling knowledge of Jesus Christ, which swept away all hesitations, misgivings, and paralyzing fears. They had become normal, dynamic, militant Christians.

As such, Christ had for them the value of God. They were not concerned about knowing more about God. They did not speculate as to God outside of his revelation in Christ. They had in Christ a sufficient relation to the universe. The full range of their need was compassed. They were complete in him. Their vision was filled and held by the personal relation to Christ. He had from the beginning of his association with them insisted upon a definite personal relation. "Jesus knows no more sacred task than to point men to his own person," says Hermann. There was no apology for his astounding demands, made in the midst of the humblest

circumstances, and with the lowliest bearing. The light and shade in him were of the intensest extremes. The most menial service was joined with the most commanding authority. There were no explanations, and no compromises. And men responded to his expectation. They read the signature of God all over him. He asked the very first place in their lives, expected it, obtained it, and when it was given he was not surprised. And there was no material pageantry behind him to allure men to surrender to him—no magic of fashion to compel—no imperial purple to awe.

It was all the other way. But God moved out upon men through a personality who focused the eternal in time, caught up into himself the claims of God upon man, presented those claims, and established himself as the Lord of life.

We are here at the heart of historical Christianity. To quote Professor H. Mackintosh: "When once the Gospel has been severed from an historic person and identified with a complex of metaphysical ideas, what it ought to be called is scarcely worth discussion; that it is no longer Christianity is clear."

II

Astronomical observation has an authoritative relation to the watch in your pocket, over the town clock, and to watches and town clocks everywhere. So the charter members of Christianity looked upon Christ as their supreme authority.

They were conscious that he had "the sovereign right to exercise moral compulsion" towards them. It was not the compulsion which came out of an argument, for Christ did not argue with them. It was a distinctly moral compulsion, which struck them in their moral being; they were sure it came from God. They were convinced that there was no higher court of appeal from this authority. When Jesus charged them, commanded them, communed with them, they believed that the soul of God was moving upon their souls. That authority in Christ became more real to them as they responded to it, and in responding to it they recognized that, since his authority came from the heart of God, it must move out through them toward the circumference of human society.

The seat of authority in religion for them, therefore, rose from the Old Testament Scriptures to their Lord. For they

had experiences which were beyond those Scriptures, and the New Testament was not yet written. With every possible veneration for the Old Testament, it could not be said that the pioneer Christians found their ultimate authority there, for their life and testimony and task went beyond the Old Testament. It is quite true they found in the Scriptures a testimony concerning their supreme authority. "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and these are they which testify of *me*."

The seat of authority in religion for them was not to be found in a church. For they had outgrown their original Jewish Church, while the new Christian Church had hardly been formed.

Nor was their religious authority mere subjective illumination. For they had not sufficient inner light until they were cleansed and regenerated by a Presence greater than their own native illumination.

Their authority was Christ, not as a definition, not as a system of doctrine—not his teaching, but his presence; not merely as Christ touched the intellect, but as he sounded the depths of personality where they longed most of all for a divine authority to grip them, heal them, and reassure them.

III

I have seen a group of houses built on land to which, I understood, the owners had no title. The houses are no doubt comfortable and the families who occupy them happy, but some day they may find themselves dispossessed. The "squatter" is all right only for the time being. *So we hear a good deal in our day about one's own inner experiences as being his authority in religion.* And that may be all well enough if the experience is something more than mere exaltation of feeling, if it has some real authority. But that sort of thing *may* have no higher source than physical or psychical exuberance. A mere mood is a dangerous thing. Feeling happy is a very comfortable experience. But it proves little, it settles nothing. There are several modern cults built upon comfortable psychology. But unfortunately they do not face the ultimate issues of life. They simply urge ignoring the disagreeable, as the ostrich buries its head in the sand in order to be out of sight.

There are all kinds of merely psychological experiences which thrive upon ignoring moral reality. But this is an ethical universe and a valid religious experience must be consistent with such a universe. Christ comes upon the soul in the full light of an ethical universe. He deals with the ethical problems within man. With ethical consistency he takes the torment out of the human conscience.

That is what he did for his apostles. And they were vividly conscious that God in Christ had done all that was necessary in the moral universe to make their moral regeneration possible. Simon Peter had sinned. Saul of Tarsus had sinned. They all had sinned. And whoever was brought back from sin into normal relations with God, with the unseen moral universe, could come only as it was morally right that they should come. Was it right that Simon Peter, Saul of Tarsus, and the rest of them should be so brought back?

That was a problem in the unseen moral world. They could not fathom it. But they gazed upon it wistfully, reverently, contritely. They believed that God dealt with that problem. They had a profound conviction that they saw hints, clues, flashes of unearthly light upon that problem, through the human life and passion of Jesus Christ.

They remembered words of Christ. They remembered mysterious, inscrutable, awe-inspiring actions. They remembered forever that all these converged in a Cross. And afterwards in the thick darkness *great flashes* of light illumined that Cross.

Those men knew they were forgiven. Their forgiveness was not an emotional outburst. It was a moral readjustment with a moral universe. They were at one with God, and all that God stood for. Whatever problem was involved in the transcendent fact of making human moral recovery an actual experience, God had dealt with it. For in Christ they had experienced it. They knew this with the same consciousness that they knew everything else, only it was keener, more vivid, than other facts of which they were conscious. This stood out memorable, unforgettable. And what did it matter what they had to eat and wear? What did it matter whether men counted them successes or failures? They were at one with God and his universe, for the Spirit of Christ was within them, bringing them into accord with the will of God for themselves and for the whole world.

CHAPTER V

Some Obstacles in the Way of Knowing Christ

DAILY READINGS

Fifth Week, First Day: The Mind Fixed Upon a Moral Standard Rather Than Upon Christ

According to the riches of his grace which he made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, making known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in him unto a dispensation of the fulness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth; in him, I say, in whom also we were made a heritage, having been foreordained according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his will; to the end that we should be unto the praise of his glory, we who had before hoped in Christ: in whom ye also, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation,—in whom, having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.—Eph. 1: 7-13.

A woman called upon a poor widow with money to help pay her rent. The widow did not answer the knock at the door because she thought it was the owner of the house for the overdue money. This is the attitude of some minds towards Christ. They look upon him as a moral landlord and they have not yet scraped together the moral coin which he demands. They will answer his knock at the door when they have reached a certain stage of moral excellence. But they never seem to be able to reach it. They are trying hard. Their thoughts oscillate between the requirements of an ideal, and a keen sense of shortcoming in relation to it. The thing immediately visualized is the moral ideal with a demand,

instead of the Presence with help. The mind is burdened with the thought of a moral mortgage, rather than inspired and heartened by the vision of a Presence with an endowment.

Thus Christ as the helper of the soul is shut out of the thoughts in the meantime. There are brief glimpses of the gracious mission of Christ to the soul, but the emphasis of the mind is not focused clearly and steadily upon his liberating and life-giving presence.

Shall we fix our attention upon law or upon grace as revealed in Christ?

Fifth Week, Second Day: The Mind Centering Upon Personal Failure Instead of Upon Christ

For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?—Rom. 7: 22-24.

Penitence is a very blessed condition of soul. But when penitence *turns the mind* in upon oneself in an attitude of introspection, of discouraged brooding, of merciless self-accusation, then we see the vice of a virtue. Suppose a child has an injured hand of which he is so painfully conscious that he will not allow a physician to touch it—he is simply making things worse. So penitence carried to the point of thinking *exclusively* of one's failures or sins, or of one's general unworthiness, does not lead anywhere except to despair. There are many people living in this attitude of mind. They think that they must continue to increase its intensity. And they are distressed because they cannot make themselves feel the pain of even greater anguish. It is just here some plunge right back into carelessness and sin. They *have an idea that they cannot meet the penitential terms of Christ,* and in sheer discouragement they give it all up.

That is remorse. Remorse is penitence turned in upon oneself, plunging amidst the darkness of one's own sense of failure. *Real penitence, on the other hand, turns the mind outwards towards Jesus Christ.* Judas Iscariot was a victim of remorse. Simon Peter learned to be a true penitent, for

he would not surrender to despair and he sought the forgiving presence of his Master.

Is our penitence leading us anywhere, or are we merely in an attitude of chronic regret?

Fifth Week, Third Day: Christ Eclipsed by Occupation with Good Work

But Martha was cumbered about much serving; and she came up to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister did leave me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. But the Lord answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: for Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.—Luke 10: 40-42.

Every practical person has a good deal of sympathy with Martha. And there is a sense in which service is the essence of devotion to Christ. At the same time we all know the possibility of becoming so engrossed in work as to lose sight of the personal relation to Christ. A man may so toil for his family as gradually to neglect the personal relation, for while his family lives by bread, it does not live by bread alone.

There are many families that would be willing to have less bread and more personal fellowship. At any rate, *the thing that stands between some lives and Christ is complete absorption in work of one kind or another. The very unselfishness of the occupation tends to increase the subtilty of the temptation to make work a substitute for personal relationship.* Self-sacrificing activity takes the place of prayer. Up to a point it is right enough, it is plausible enough, and yet the hour comes when a great mistake is recognized. Or one is haunted even in the midst of his noble work by the fear that he is making a profound mistake, that after all nothing can stand as a complete substitute for a personal spiritual relation. For without that the quality of the work is weakened, the power and vision in doing it are impaired, and without inner spiritual vitality the events of the day do not minister to the growth of the soul.

Is our service the outcome of a personal relationship or a substitute for it?

Fifth Week, Fourth Day: Christ Eclipsed by Making Prayer an End in Itself

And in praying use not vain repetitions, as the Gentiles do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.—Matt. 6: 7, 8.

The habit of prayer is of supreme importance in the spiritual life if the object towards whom prayer is offered is more or less real to him who prays. *But is it not possible for one to pray to his own prayers—to be taken up with the fact that he is praying, that he has prayed so many times or for so long a time?* If one makes the mistake of substituting going to the spring for drinking the water of the spring, he is deceiving himself. And if he should think that the oftener he goes to the spring the more efficacious it would be, he would do himself an injury. This is the attitude of some in religion. Christ is eclipsed by the consciousness of praying. It is the act of praying that is real to the person. It is the act which is looked to for a result. The means is made an end. It is as if one were to substitute a key for his house, as if he should revel in the fact that he has his key while he stands outside of his house in the storm. And if one key would not do, he would procure a bunch of keys, and insist that now surely he should find escape from the storm.

Am I conscious of God, or of my prayers?

Fifth Week, Fifth Day: Christ Eclipsed by Thoughts of the Attitude of Others

While he yet spake, they come from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Teacher any further? But Jesus, not heeding the word spoken, saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Fear not, only believe.—Mark 5: 35, 36.

When some have sought the presence of Christ, they have been conscious of a cynical, chilling whisper from the world, "What is the use of your trying to interest the Lord in your case? It is too hopeless. Trouble not the Master." They have become more conscious of that paralyzing suggestion than of the Friend of sinners.

I have heard the story of a poor woman living on the Balmoral estate who had been invited by Queen Victoria to visit her at her castle. The invitation not having been accepted, her Majesty asked her friend for the reason. The shy answer was given: "I am afraid of the men with the brass buttons at the door." So the thought of the world's criticism, condemnation, hostility—real or imagined—has filled the mind, instead of the invitation of the Saviour. Many a seeker is kept from the knowledge of Christ because he cannot put divine love in the front of his mind instead of thoughts of the unforgiving spirit of the world.

Are we mastered by the real attitude of Christ, or by the imagined attitude of the world?

Fifth Week, Sixth Day: Visualizing Jesus Christ

And he fell upon the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: but rise, and enter into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.—Acts 9: 4-6.

When we think of our beloved dead we make a mental image of them as we knew them on earth. Of course, we all know that it is the spirit which survives, and yet we get near to the spirit through mental images of physical forms that were dear to us. The mental picture of a former physical presence conveys, we might say sacramentally, a spiritual presence.

In the same way do we not get near to the living spiritual presence of Jesus Christ through mentally visualizing him in the light of his human personality?

It is not that we think of him merely as living in the past, but his human past aids us in thinking of him intelligently, and spiritually, in the present. And if Christ *was* the supreme human point of contact for men with God *he is so still.*

If Christ *was* a fact, *then he continues to be a fact.* If the essential message and power of his life proceeded from his imperishable Spirit, then his living Spirit continues to convey that message and power. *If Christ claimed a personal, practical, supreme, spiritual relation to men once in time, then surely that relation is permanent.* A spiritual fact is an abiding reality, in spite of all physical phenomenal changes.

Therefore if we admit that Jesus Christ *had* a personal, spiritual relation to men, then we cannot deny *that same relationship now* without doing violence to a spiritual fact. For a spiritual fact does not cease to exist, because physical death cannot injure it any more than a sword can cut a sunbeam. The sunbeam shines on.

Fifth Week, Seventh Day: The Nearness of Jesus Christ

And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.—Matt. 28: 20.

When we think of distance we usually make a mental image of so many miles, or yards, or inches. But when we come to think of a spiritual presence we must try to get away from this physical idea. For physical distance belongs to physical things.

For example, in the mental world there is no such thing as geography. The only distance between us and an idea is the lack of comprehension, or the lack of desire to comprehend. So the only separation in the spiritual world is the lack of spirituality, or the lack of concern for it. *Let us therefore shut out of our thoughts the idea of physical distance when we think of the living Spirit of Jesus Christ.* This idea has disheartened many a seeker. It is as if one were thousands of miles away from help. It has the instinctive strain and anxiety of a very long-distance telephone call for help. It is this idea that has made many sink into despair. When we get rid of the conception of physical far-away-ness in regard to Jesus Christ, a considerable part of our spiritual strain and anxiety vanishes. Just as when our loved ones die, some part of our human sorrow consists in a sense of far-away-ness which we should try hard to eliminate from our thoughts, so in our relation to Jesus Christ we must break that cruel spell of spatial separation.

Let us clearly and definitely eliminate all idea of the physical

from the problem of our relation to Jesus Christ. He is here. What is the only barrier that may stand between us and Christ?

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

I

If Jesus Christ is to become a vivid reality, the mind must get rid of everything that turns the thoughts in upon itself. It must think outwards. There are many things which tend to hold the attention upon oneself, and not upon Christ. As some are kept in the grip of paralyzing depression by thinking exclusively of their failures, there are others held in the grip of self-satisfaction by thinking of their excellent achievements. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, "God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are . . . I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." Like Saul of Tarsus they assert that they are "as touching the law blameless." Their religion tends to become self-conscious goodness. They are satisfied and fortified by thoughts of themselves. Their standard of moral measurement is comparison with their neighbors, with a keen sense of personal superiority. So long as their self-conscious attitude continues there can be no sense of the reality of Christ. A self-centered man may often have no sense of what another man who is speaking to him is saying, he is so completely taken up with his own thoughts and what he wants to say. He has no mental receptiveness. That is the attitude of the morally self-satisfied in relation to Christ.

It is astonishing when we are preoccupied how little we see. A man may pass a monument almost every day for years and not know the inscription upon it. He may not even know the name of the famous person it represents.

I have had more than one man who had passed the statue in front of St. Paul's Cathedral in London hundreds of times, inaccurately declare it to be a figure representing the late Queen Victoria. If we are not interested in certain sections of a newspaper, it is amusing how we may cease to be aware of the existence of such news, even when we read the newspaper every day. And preoccupation with moral self-satisfaction may blot out the presence of Christ so that he is a mere name amongst a multitude of others.

II

We may eclipse our vision of Christ by having the mind taken up with our condition of indifference, or what we conceive to amount to indifference. We may be tempted to center our thoughts not upon our bad selves or our good selves, but upon our indifferent selves.

We judge the inner life to be not sufficiently awake, not sufficiently concerned for Christ—so that the thought is withdrawn from him to be concentrated upon yet another form of inner condition. This time it is moral numbness. It is as if when some gracious friend came to see us we should remain in our room, cogitating upon how to improve our attitude towards him, before we should meet him, whereas common sense would teach us that it is in forgetting our attitude, and thinking of our friend and his unselfish friendliness, that all unconsciously our attitude would be changed. His presence would do far more in the way of thawing us out than all our isolated introspection could do. Friendships are not made or healed by morbid self-analysis in aloofness from our fellows. And we are not moving towards the light when we try to improve our condition of real or supposed moral numbness, lacerating our inner life by self-accusation. We only succeed in automatically banishing Christ from our thoughts by such unhealthy preoccupation. Large numbers of people are caught in this net of inner self-contemplation upon a good, bad, or indifferent self, and all such introspective attitudes blot out the Presence. You see illustrations of this tendency towards self-analysis in "Amiel's Journal"—a certain brilliant self-examination which issues into a sense of paralyzing futility. You see it in "Hamlet," producing melancholy, inaction, dreamy detachment. John Milton, writing a treatise on divorce on his wedding trip, reveals an analytical preoccupation which tends to chill human relationship. And it is this impulse which distills a dense fog, shutting out our glorious spiritual relationships. Ignorance of the prevalence of this introspective attitude among young people in their teens is part of the culpable ignorance of large numbers of Christian parents. Months, it may be years, of youthful misery caused by earnest but misdirected self-analysis; a beautiful, and naturally happy young spirit cowed into chronic depression and religious fear through lack of help in the direction of

objective healthy-mindedness—the real situation is often never even suspected in many a Christian home. All kinds of religious duties and enterprises are zealously carried forward in the family life, but there is not even a suspicion that a sensitive boy or girl spends half of many a night sleepless, worrying over an inner religious condition. And because nothing is said about it, or no hint of it is given, it is taken for granted that no acute and perplexing problem exists. If there is one thing more than another which many a religiously interested young person needs, it is to help him to turn his thoughts away from himself to the contemplation of Jesus Christ as the answer to all his inner need.

III

There is another hindrance to the clear realization of Christ which brings failure to many earnest efforts, namely, *the very strong tendency to visualize a preconceived notion as to what Christ will do in one's life.*

It is a dangerous thing to create a preconceived image as to what is going to happen in one's life when Christ enters into it, because the mind then centers upon *one's own ideas of the results* of Christ's presence *rather than upon that presence.*

Our idea of a reality may be a totally different thing from the reality itself. We may lose the reality in pursuing the idea of it. The dog lost the bone by biting at the reflection of it in the water. Christian biographies are often of the greatest spiritual value, and yet sometimes individuals seize upon a dramatic, sensational experience in the life of a victorious Christian, and conclude that if spiritual experience is to be real to them it must come in exactly the same way. That is a wrong and misleading conclusion.

For example, if you ask some who are seeking to know Christ what they are expecting, they may quote some highly emotional incident from the life of a well-known Christian. They will tell you they are waiting for that kind of mystical attack to take possession of them. This is the attitude in which earnest souls have been known to remain expectantly for years. They are wistfully looking for this kind of answer to their prayers. Nothing is considered of any real religious value until this preconceived vision of mysterious ecstasy takes hold of their feelings.

That is to say, an effect is sought in place of a cause. Emo-

tion is an effect, while the creative cause of inner change is the presence of Christ. *It is a disheartening attitude to be seeking a blessing rather than the Blesser.* But that is the chronic, disappointed expectation of earnest seekers who never seem to find what they seek. And they never will until they turn from all kinds of emotional imaginings and seek only to receive the living presence of the Master, without sensational accompaniments. Effects do not usually manifest themselves until the cause has had time to be established. You do not see the green sprout rising above the ground from a seed the moment it is planted. Besides, while there may be emotional results flowing from trust in Christ, such symptoms cannot be rested upon, because they come and go. They are like glorified clouds in the sky, just as unstable, and as fleeting.

The mind must escape from all thought of the inner condition, from all thought of what it imagines is going to happen in the way of inner changes, and concentrate wholly upon the presence of Christ. An invalid may seriously retard his physical recovery by having his thoughts constantly centered upon his symptoms. Even where they do not exist he will succeed in creating them. Almost the supreme task of his friends is to get that man's mind away from himself, for there can be no progress so long as the patient is poisoning the springs of health by black, morbid visions of disease. On the other hand, it may be almost as bad for the sick man to have preconceived inaccurate images in his mind of the way in which symptoms of his recovery will appear. If he thinks that, having fulfilled certain conditions, therefore healing must be instantly evident or that healing should take a certain preconceived form, then when it does not happen, he is liable to discouragement. And such discouragement will hinder the whole process of recovery. The right attitude of his mind would be *concentrated, invincible trust in the means of recovery* and the exclusion of thoughts of morbid condition, and also shutting out hasty, inaccurate, mental pictures of the way in which the cure is coming.

It is Christ then who should be the object of our thought and not another person's experience of him, nor a preconceived notion of what our experience should be, nor the recurrence of the symptoms of a former experience which we once had, however real it may have been at that time.

CHAPTER VI

The Thoughts in Relation to Christ

DAILY READINGS

Sixth Week, First Day: The Place of Thought in Our Relation to Christ

Looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that hath endured such gainsaying of sinners against himself, that ye wax not weary, fainting in your souls.—Heb. 12: 2, 3.

One may have a large library and little knowledge. He may have much stored knowledge, and little actual thought. *To think upon anything is to have an actual, present, immediate contact with it. "Thought is the seed of action." Thought of Christ is our point of contact with him.* Our thoughts express, or may express, the other elements of our personality in the act of contemplation.

But so many thoughts never arrive at their destination; they are waylaid, they are sidetracked, confused. We have tried to indicate some of the things that do this mischievous work, so that we may be able to permit our thoughts actually to rest upon Christ. *Here is the very heart's secret of the relationship, actually to make this mental connection—clearly, calmly, deliberately, to stay the mind upon him.*

Have we given this act its true place in our Christian life? Is it not true that we have often overlooked, minimized, dishonored, the place of thought in the maintaining of relations with Christ? Our thought life is like a telephone "central" when the soul seeks fellowship with Christ—"central" sometimes lets other interests in upon the line just as the soul begins its interview, or "central" says "the line is busy." And so the days go by.

"When our thoughts are born
Though they be good and humble one should mind
How they are reared, or some will go astray
And shame their mother."

Sixth Week, Second Day: Thinking Upon Christ Is More Than Mere Reverie

But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting: for he that doubteth is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord; a doubleminded man, unstable in all his ways.—James 1: 6-8.

Locke said that "reverie is when ideas float in our mind without reflection or regard of the understanding." It is not an uncommon attitude of the mind in regard to Christ. There exists an impression that if the thoughts merely drift tranquilly in an indefinite kind of way *towards* spiritual reality, the end is served. "Watch the changing color of the waves that break upon the idle seashore of the mind." And some people spend a good deal of valuable time in this condition. It may arise from a superstitious opinion that this is religion, or it may arise from habitual mental indolence, or it may be caused by sheer physical and mental weariness, or it may spring from having no clear objective before the groping mind. But the point at present is that so far as the spiritual life is concerned, muddled, addled thinking is not a guaranteed means of grace. The tendency to seek always the point of least mental resistance in our devotional life is a definite and gross injustice to the deepest within us. It is a failure of the mind to do its part in establishing and maintaining relations with Christ. And except when we are exhausted or perplexed it is an insult to him who seeks to convey his wealth of divine grace to our personality. Inattention to what a person has to say to us is a severe verdict upon our estimate of the value of what he has to say.

Is our spiritual communion mere reverie, or is it clear thinking that has actually made terminal connections?

Sixth Week, Third Day: Thinking Upon Christ a Growing Habit of Mental Attention

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war accord-

ing to the flesh (for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds); casting down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.—II Cor. 10: 3-5.

Spiritual contemplation has a definitely intellectual element, and it carries with it a very real intellectual, as well as general, culture. For the needs of our deepest life impel the mind towards concentration. "The one thing I cannot do is to concentrate in my devotional exercises," is what one sometimes hears. And the plea is offered that one has not the gift for that sort of thing. But, as a matter of fact, one can concentrate upon anything in which he is interested. Interest quickly guarantees mental attention. Whenever the object upon which the mind should rest is clear and interesting, concentration is secured. There is really no such thing as a gift for concentration, it is a gift for being interested, if you like. People who may be the most listless in their devotional life may be past masters in concentration upon business.

The ideal mental relation would be for us to make Christ the home of our thought. In this attitude we would certainly be redeemed from mental vagrancy. I suppose none of us would profess to have attained to this. But do not misunderstand the idea—it is not that we should always be thinking about Christ. That literally carried out might end in insanity; it certainly would be a complete perversion of the purpose. All evasion of duty under the pretext of spiritual communion will defeat the purposes of Christ in the equipment of human life for service. To have a home does not mean that we never go outside the door. It should rather imply that we go out refreshed, nourished, inspired; we live under the spell of it, and come back to it as to our haven of refuge.

How is interest in Christ deepened in order to secure concentration upon him?

Sixth Week, Fourth Day: The Element of Time in Relation to Mental Attention Towards Christ

And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest thou not watch one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into tempta-

tion: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. And again he went away, and prayed, saying the same words. And again he came, and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they knew not what to answer him. And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough; the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Arise, let us be going: behold, he that betrayeth me is at hand.—Mark 14: 37-42.

There must be definite periods of time given to spiritual contemplation, which is another way of saying that Christian living must have the principle of method in it. A well ordered existence has stated times for its various forms of enterprise. We have times for rest and activity, for food and labor. And such arrangement need not make any man the slave of method. In any case, one is less a slave in obeying a method than in obeying the mere impulse of a mood. Spiritual failure often has its starting place in substituting a mood for a method, so that the contemplation of Christ has thereby become a fitful, uncertain, vague experience, weakened and starved by other influences; whereas method, stated times, clearly arranged engagements for devotion, tend to tame and discipline our wayward moods into reliable habits.

No man can tell another what time he must give for the culture of the friendship of Christ. But there must be stated seasons of communion and that will mean sacrifices in keeping the appointments. It is quite true one may cultivate the great friendship apart from those stated times of quiet when the door is shut. *But the deepening of intimacy with Christ rises out of recognized seasons of meditation and prayer.* We have fixed hours in which we partake of food, the assimilation of which goes on when we, unconscious of the process, are engrossed in our daily work. So it is the fixed appointments with our Lord which guarantee the assimilation of his mind into our being when we are about our Master's business.

Does your recognition of the time element tend towards the merely mechanical?

Sixth Week, Fifth Day: The Active and Passive Aspects of Mental Attention Towards Christ

And he fell upon the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he

said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: but rise, and enter into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.—Acts 9: 4-6.

When we engage in a conversation, or when we take up the telephone, we usually exercise an active and a passive mental attitude. We speak and we listen. And in our relation to Christ we exercise both the active and passive aspects of our mind. *In point of time* our speaking is sometimes first, and our listening afterwards. But *in point of emphasis, the attitude of listening is of primary importance.* Why? Because Christ has more to communicate than we have. To use a variety of New Testament metaphors, he is the vine, we are the branches. He is the mind, we are the body. He is the giver and we are the recipients. He is the leader, we are the followers. And if such is our relationship to him, then the primary emphasis is upon our mental receptivity. *It is of greater importance for us to listen to him than for us to talk to him.* And when we say this, it is surely not belittling our active prayer side in the fellowship. The fact is, a great deal of vital meaning has been emptied out of the relationship because we have sometimes drowned the voice of Christ by continuing our talking to him beyond the bounds of reverence. We have too often presumed to inform him when we should have been humbly listening. We have made speaking an end in itself. Have we not said our prayers? is what we sometimes say to ourselves.

There are the two aspects, and we would not disparage one aspect, while calling for a new recognition of the other.

In what ways do we fulfil the recognition of the active and passive attitudes in spiritual life?

Sixth Week, Sixth Day: The Passive Attitude in Mental Attention Towards Christ

And while he said these things, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my Son, my chosen: hear ye him.—Luke 9: 34, 35.

The passive attitude of mind does not imply weakened attention. The artist in his relation to nature is not inattentive because he gives himself up to the message of the landscape.

He is receptive. He has silenced his artistic theories which had threatened to rise up and talk, and he listens to the creative message. *In order to listen successfully we must be free from preoccupation.* We observe every day that a preoccupied man is a poor listener. To be free from preoccupation implies living in the present. It requires that we shall not mentally chase the next thing, or be under the lash of the last thing. Some lives have no real present, it is all past or future. They are not free, they are mortgaged either to yesterday or to tomorrow. The present for them has simply no vital significance. I am not now thinking of the multitudes of stricken children of sorrow when I say this, for many of them live heroically in the present far more than do those who are untouched by sorrow. It is in this attitude of passive attention, of freedom from preoccupation, that Christ gets his opportunity to communicate to us his presence, his grace, his will. And it is from this receptive bearing of the mind that active fidelity to the mind of Christ springs.

What are some psychological conditions of freedom from mental preoccupation in an attitude of listening?

Sixth Week, Seventh Day: The Active Attitude in Mental Attention

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves. For if any one is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a mirror: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But he that looketh into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and so continueth, being not a hearer that forgetteth but a doer that worketh, this man shall be blessed in his doing.—James 1: 22-25.

Suppose a pupil has put himself under the direction of a great artist, what is his active mental attitude towards his teacher? Four words practically cover the main aspects of that relation—contemplation, inquiry, elimination, and translation. (1) The pupil contemplates the personality of his master. His mind actively searches for the secrets of his power. If the teacher is worthy of it, the pupil lives in an attitude of active reverence. (2) He inquires for explanations, for directions, for guidance. (3) He eliminates by

active mental resistance all inferior suggestions that might injure the spell of his master over him. He throws off mediocre artistic influences. (4) He translates into artistic work what his teacher has communicated to him in his passive attitude.

Nothing is really ours till we begin to translate it into life. It is in the act of translation into concrete facts that we turn vision into character. It is as we obey Christ that we educate our capacity for listening. We cannot substitute contemplation for action. Some are content to be always listening, while others are content to be always doing.

Which is our supreme temptation in this respect?

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

I

But upon what in Christ shall the mind think? Shall it be his presence as a whole as the light of the New Testament illumines it? Yes. We do this in regard to other friends of whom we think. We have a place in our thought for thinking of a personality as a whole, apart from his specific work. There are friends who have helped us along definite lines of helpfulness, and while we sometimes think of them in these practical relationships, we also think of them simply as great souls. Of course, the details of relationship have given the materials for the general view. But the point at the moment is that there is a general as well as a particular contemplation of Christ—just as when we have climbed up from the valley to the summit of a mountain, and have silently contemplated the broad sweep of a glorious landscape; or as we close our eyes after reading the biography of an almost sublime character, and try to image the great personality, detached from mundane affairs, looming up before our vision against a background of eternal spaciousness.

It is this general view of which many are in urgent need. They have long been living amidst controversial biographical details, or they have been students of archeology, or of historical literary criticism. They have been like botanists who have sought out the flora of the valley, but have not seen the view from the mountain. One fears that large numbers of our young people have been taken upon long botanical excursions through the valleys, but have not so often had an invita-

tion to the bracing mountain-top and its awe-inspiring vista of grandeur. Is it not most unfortunate, too, that the discussions one so often hears regarding Christ have to do so exclusively with controversial minutiæ which would be right enough for theological scholars? But busy, non-theological, common-sense men and women have simply neither time, training, nor inclination for the involved processes of discussion. Has mere criticism not been carried too far into the popular mind, while the comprehensive view of Christ has been to an unwarrantable degree eclipsed?

Let us have periods of contemplation upon Christ when we read whole books of the New Testament at a time. Let us read them over and over until we get the larger view. Let us contemplate our Lord in his spiritual transcendence until we see something of the magnitude of his place in his relation to God and men, to eternity and time, to the present and the future.

II

But there is also a particular view of Christ which must engage our thoughts. We must see him in his relation not only to the universal, but to the actual situation in our own lives. The great characters of history had not only national contacts, they had concrete relations with individuals in actual practical life. And this has been preeminently the attitude of Christ. He was in a profound sense the discoverer of the individual. He was the discoverer of the most fundamental needs of the individual. He has made the supreme diagnosis of the inner human condition. And we must think of him in this relation. How shall we do it? How do you think of the physician when he comes in response to your calls? You think of him in relation to your health. You think of the decorator in relation to the freshening up of your rooms. Each has a clear line of helpfulness along which he moves, and for which you invite him to your house. *In the same way Christ has a definite spiritual relation to our inner needs. And we must think of him as carrying to us in his living personality the counterpart of our necessity.* He has always insisted that this was the line along which we must interpret the relationship. He has spoken of himself in a variety of functions as answering human need.

What then are our needs? In the light of them we shall

interpret our thought of Christ in his relation to us. One fundamental necessity is the renewal of the conscience, the lifting of the mortgage of guilt, and the readjustment of the moral sense.

(1) *We think of Christ as having power morally to forgive and morally to restore. That is to say, the mind turns to think of him as having the moral authority and compassion to forgive on the one hand, and transcendent, communicable holiness by which to quicken the conscience on the other.* In our contemplation of him we think of him as having a delegated authority given by God and shared by no other for the forgiving of human guilt. We meditate upon him as exercising that authority in our lives, in conjunction with his own power—issuing from his spiritual presence—to renew the conscience. We think therefore, of Christ in relation to our present moral condition as bearing an attitude of active, sufficient, and immediate inner restoration towards us. "He restoreth my soul."

(2) *We think of him as enlightening our understanding* as we contemplate him as our wisdom, and as such revealing his mind to us. When we read a great book we are conscious of having our minds stimulated, clarified. As we listen to a wise man we realize that our minds become illumined and we go away with a new vision. How much Plato owed to Socrates in the stimulation of his mental originality! And as we think of the mind of Christ being revealed to us in active overtures of definite direction, the eyes of our understanding become enlightened. To such a degree is this the case that those who thus meditate upon him become sharers of a wisdom transcending that of men much wiser in other directions.

(3) *We think of Christ as communicating moral power to us.* We image "the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe." We visualize him as being in an active immediate relation to us of communicating his energy.

I have mentioned these directions along which our thoughts move in relation to Christ simply to illustrate the point that it is not enough *merely to think of Christ in a general way. We must intelligently consider Christ as bringing to bear upon the variety of our human need the variety of his sufficiency.* And in our meditation we ought to take time to think deliberately of him in the various aspects of his redeeming relation—not as remote from us—not as something that is possible and

may happen in the future—but as something that is happening within us at this present moment.

III

It is surely a great mistake to live in an attitude of mere moral or spiritual aspiration, more or less confused. Such is the chronic condition of large numbers of well-meaning people.

They mistake religious aspiration for Christian character. Ardent and muddled longing takes the place of a clear view of the situation. The same confused contact with home, or business, or friends, would mean the collapse of the relationship. As a matter of fact while there may be a very definite place for religious aspiration, *the supreme place of emphasis is not upon aspiration, but upon the intelligent recognition that Christ maintains a certain immediate, active bearing towards our personality.* The emphasis at the breakfast table is not upon the aspiration for breakfast, but upon the food in sight, and the actual partaking of it. The emphasis at the railway station is not upon the longing to go to a certain place, it is upon actually getting into the right train.

There is a great amount of mere futile longing in the religious attitude of some people. And if that longing were clear cut it would not be so bad, but unfortunately it is often only a kind of stupid earnestness and the stupidity is excused because of the earnestness. But even when this longing is not stupid or confused, the emphasis should not be put on the longing, but upon a clear visualization and active relation towards the object of the longing. Suppose you were to tell your host as you sit at his table that you greatly desired to partake of the luncheon he has provided. You might even enumerate the things you would enjoy; and suppose you continued to sit in this detached and longing attitude, he would begin to be worried about you. And yet, in all seriousness, this is the attitude of some in regard to the spiritual sufficiency that is in Christ. Their religious history is largely aspiration. It is largely religious self-consciousness. The emphasis of their thoughts is upon their condition and longings. And that has become a chronic condition. They have a grim satisfaction in knowing what their specific longings are, but there is no real progress beyond that. The same ground is covered

today that was covered yesterday, and it has been so for a dozen years. *What is the matter?*

The trouble probably arises from the absence of a clear vision of Christ in his specific, immediate relation to human need. Christ is not seen, at this given moment, as actually bearing in his own personality the answer to the needs of which one is conscious.

For instance, if you are thirsty and there is no water within reach you keep thinking about your thirst. But when you come into contact with a supply of water, you put the emphasis of your thought on the water and not upon your disappearing thirst. It is a lack of seeing Christ clearly that is probably the trouble with this attitude of futile aspiration that never arrives. Well, you say, how is one to see him clearly? We have gone over that already. But it does not matter how often we go over it, if we insist upon being taken up with our religious aspirations instead of with Christ, we cannot see him clearly, and we never shall in that attitude, and nothing spiritually vital therefore can happen. But if we transfer the emphasis of our thought to him and the specific elements of his personality through which he communicates his grace to us, and forget about our aspirations, as we contemplate him, we shall unconsciously be changed into his image.

CHAPTER VII

The Will in Relation to Christ

DAILY READINGS

Seventh Week, First Day: The Supremacy of the Will

If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself.—John 7: 17.

Our will is the focus point of our personality. As we will, we live. As we do not will, we drift. Life is fundamentally will and we know it. If will is the king, as it were, in the inner life, he must be a constitutional king—he may rule, but not overrule. He may be an executive, but not a tyrant. That is to say, will has a definite relation to all the other powers of our being, but not a coercive relation. Will has a vital relation to the reason, but it must not be despotic. *We cannot will to believe what is obviously false.* That would be a despotic use of the will. At the same time, we must will to believe what reasonably claims us; if not, then will is a slave instead of an executive.

We must not will to imprison our affections, but we must will to regulate them. Our will affects the rest of us, and is affected by the rest of us. But the point we would emphasize here is that it is the executive for the personality. *And according as it lives and acts healthily so will be the health of the rest of our powers. It would be small use to keep informing a man's mind whose will is out of business.* You might as well try to fill up a bottomless pit.

Do we live recognizing that the condition of our will is imparting light or darkness to our mind?

Seventh Week, Second Day: Christ's Relation to Our Will

He was in the world, and the world was made through him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believed on his name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.—John 1: 10-13.

The will is the door of personality. Christ will not, cannot, break open that door. Even to redeem us he will not invade our personality. He recognizes, respects, and safeguards our personal identity, our native freedom of choice. If he were to overpower us, even for our highest good, nothing moral would be achieved. He would thus in reality destroy us as persons. In the very nature of things, Christ cannot force himself or his redeeming grace upon us. And the man who says divine love will save him apart from his own will, has forgotten that even divine love must wait for the cooperation of the human will. But the only separation between our personality and the presence and power of Christ is our will. There is nothing that lies between the deepest needs of our life and the wealth of his sufficiency except our will. Pause and measure the extent of that separation. Refusal means a barrier of non-conduction. Assent means that the actual contact has been established. The action of the will is like turning on or turning off the water in the house.

Have we exercised our will in relation to Christ as we have done in some other great decisions?

Seventh Week, Third Day: The Will Deciding

And he led him to Jerusalem, and set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou art the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: for it is written,

He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, to guard thee:

and,

On their hands they shall bear thee up,
Lest haply thou dash thy foot against a stone.

And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God.—Luke 4: 9-12.

It is not difficult actually to jump from a height, but it may be very difficult to make up the mind to do it. It is not usually hard to take any actual step, it is the previous pro and con debate that is the real difficulty.

The act of will which is the life's blood of a decision creates an historic moment. There we are at the heart of reality and sometimes we know it and feel it. We can all think of great movements which were born in that moment of an heroic decision. There are multitudes who live all their days under the spell of one great hour. We realize that it is within our power to create a personal crisis by an act of will. We know, too, it may be, that as we postpone that crisis, we postpone real living. *We know it is possible at this moment to resolve that Christ shall have a new nearness to, a new grasp upon, our life.* Is there anything more momentous than that? Is there anything more immediately practical and far reaching? Is there anything that has such promise throbbing in it as the resolve to open the door to Christ now?

Is there anything more tragic than to let any set of circumstances compel a decision against Christ, when our own sense of right would crown him?

Seventh Week, Fourth Day: The Will Surrendering

And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and said unto him, Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, He is gone in to lodge with a man that is a sinner. And Zacchæus stood, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have wrongfully exacted aught of any man, I restore fourfold.—Luke 19: 5-8.

When a man takes the plunge into an unknown future by a moral decision, he commits himself to cooperate with forces which begin to exercise a new and powerful directing influence upon him. And when one has willed Christ to enter his life he has in a real sense abandoned himself to the control of Christ. *This is not to say that Christ has come into his life to help him to muddle through. The step involves the supremacy of Christ.* It is as if a man, not having made a

success of his business, asked a rich and wise friend to help him. His friend, refusing to help him, says, however, that he will take over the business as a senior partner and put all his capital and experience into it, if the man seeking help is willing to assume the position of junior partner.

That is what the decision to receive Christ implies. Christ's purpose is to take control, cooperating with the will of him who has willed the Master into his life. Christ becomes the senior partner. Our relation to Christ is not to try to get him and his power into our schemes, but to surrender ourselves to him and his schemes.

Is our idea of surrender that of an act or of a lifelong attitude?

Seventh Week, Fifth Day: The Will Appropriating Strength

That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God.—Eph. 3: 16-19.

When an electrical inventor patiently recognizes and surrenders his mechanism to the laws of electrical conduction he also appropriates those laws and hitches them victoriously to his invention. When the patriot sacrificially surrenders to the demands of his country, he is able to appropriate into himself the essential spirit of his country. And when the Christian will has surrendered to the supreme will of Christ it is able to appropriate the energy that is in the will of Christ. It is the surrendered will that dares to appropriate fresh power from Christ, the power of God.

This attitude of the will of appropriating may be likened to the recharging of the spent electrical battery by contact with the current flowing from the power-house. It is the privilege of the exhausted Christian will to renew its vitality by contact with its source of supply. The consenting will may be changed into the energetic will. What is static becomes

dynamic. Capacity becomes ability. But it is only the will that wears itself out in obedience to Christ which has the fearless trust to claim the energy for its own renewal. It is our right now to let our weariness be changed into might.

Is inner exhaustion, or power, the supreme element in our consciousness?

Seventh Week, Sixth Day: The Will Cooperating with Christ

Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.—Matt 28: 19, 20.

The secret of the growth of the power of many men has consisted in a great partnership. They became sharers in large resources and comprehensive programs. They brought their wills into tune with a movement greater than themselves. Christ focuses the power of God and the program for the coming of his Kingdom upon earth. Whoever cooperates with Christ becomes a sharer in both the program and the power. Both of these challenge the Christian will. Christ calls upon a man to do something he had never dreamed of doing, and which he has no power to achieve. It may be to influence spiritually another life. It may be to undertake a new specific social task. Such a command carries with it the ability for the task. In the attempt to fulfil the command, the power of Christ gets its opportunity to accompany the attempt. The cooperating will of a Christian thus obtains its expansive education. It achieves its supreme destiny through the enterprise of Christ. This is the message to us from the great characters of the New Testament and of Christian history. Their greatness unconsciously came to them in their self-forgetting attitude of cooperation with the will of their Master. What they saw was a gigantic task, what they experienced was triumphant power.

Think of the men and women who have become great through contact with Christ's missionary program, through expressing his social sympathy.

Are we definitely related to the universal program of Christ?

Seventh Week, Seventh Day: The Will Forgetting Itself

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the ordinance of the law might be fulfilled in us.—Rom. 8: 2-4.

"If only I could will hard enough. That is my trouble, I have not sufficient will power." How often one hears a statement like that. But it is an entirely wrong point of view. *In our relation to Christ it is not thought about our will, but about him that is the place of emphasis.* For example, suppose someone knocks at your door. You do not think of your will, and its condition, you think of the knock at the door, and your will acts automatically as a result of that attitude of your thoughts. It is the person knocking at the door who affects your will. *That is to say, we must not think will, we must think Christ.* We might think will for years and be no further forward; whereas when we let the mind rest steadily upon Christ the will is thereby renewed. The only healthy way in which to grow in will power is to forget about it, and visualize clearly the presence, power, and commands of Christ. Will power is a by-product. *Christ-consciousness is a far greater creator of will power, than will power is a creator of Christ-consciousness. Will worship increases self-consciousness and eclipses Christ.* Our spiritual power and victory can be realized only as we maintain the relation which is beyond ourselves.

Do we think will power or divine power? Do we think ourselves or beyond ourselves?

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

I

When a person arrives at a certain conclusion, say regarding another person, you may not doubt the honesty or the ability of his judgment. But you may feel that the judgment lacked something. *You say, for example, that it is a weak or an uncharitable judgment, which means that you do not believe pure reason should act by itself in making a judgment*

upon a person. As a matter of fact, pure reason never does so act. There are always other influences beneath the reason and beneath the consciousness which affect the decisions of the mind. That is why we say we reveal our own characters in our judgments of others. We make manifest what things are influencing the mind, whether they are good or bad. So we say that there is no such thing as pure reason in our relation to Jesus Christ. We bring all that we are to that judgment. And instead of judging him, we may be unconsciously judging ourselves. Men certainly did that in their personal relations to him when he lived as a man. We are constantly doing it in our own relationships with our fellows. Our criticisms sometimes are not really criticisms, they are self-revelations. They are a credit to us or they are the reverse. If they are a discredit, the merely intellectual part may be very shrewd indeed, but the intellect has not had the right kind of illumination from the rest of the personality. It is when people know this about themselves that they sometimes learn not to trust their own judgment, and they turn to others who may not be in any sense so clever mentally, but who have sounder elements in their personalities which inform their intellects.

What we wish to do here is to emphasize this fact and try to recognize a principle. If one finds a very strong hesitation to trust his own harsh judgment regarding a fellow-man, and rounds out his impressions by reference to the opinions of others, making his judgment more kindly and gracious and full, he must let that principle have a place in his life in regard to Christ.

II

Among the influences which affect the judgment for weal or woe none is more effective than the condition of the human will. Christ insisted upon the enormous influence of the will upon the whole realm of knowledge, not by being conscious of itself, but by acting in response to light. He insisted that he who doeth shall know. Frederick W. Robertson has told us that obedience is the organ of spiritual vision. We have all put this to the proof again and again. We have held certain ideas, let us say, during a period of inaction, and when the will has acted the whole outlook has changed without anyone having said anything. Or when we have been disobedient the

situation has changed in the opposite way. The influences of the condition of the will upon our mental vision may be simply startling—so much so that a new volitional attitude may mean an absolutely new view of a given situation—and yet when we say this let us remember the renewal of the will is not achieved by thought of itself. An hour of reality proceeding from an active will has given many a man a new universe to live in. What had before appeared to be intolerable, and no argument could change it, became like a bank of cloud in the sky suddenly transfigured into surpassing beauty as the sun played upon it. What large numbers of people require, therefore, is not more information and discussion, but more illumination arising from the legitimate and healthy relation of the will to the mind. We are not here pleading the cause of the will to believe; we are simply insisting upon the automatic interrelation of the faculties. "The will to believe" may mean an entirely artificial relation to reality. As the idea is sometimes popularly understood, "the will to believe" may simply be the violation of intellectual integrity, a kind of highwayman with a cocked pistol saying to the reason "Money or your life." That kind of thing can have no place in a rational existence. But the natural, normal influence of the will upon the processes of thought is an entirely different matter.

Let us see to it then that the active will is doing its share in the true vision of life. The purely intellectual attitude is unhealthy, abnormal, deceptive. It is not really rational living. Many people think it is, for they put no great emphasis upon living. A man may have a will as weak as water and keep his affairs like a junk shop. He may have no kind of relation to the ordinary facts of social existence, no memory for his engagements, no contact with concrete reality, and yet because he has a keen mind and is an original thinker everything is excused. But surely that is not the attitude in which we see reality. For what we see must always depend upon what we bring from our deeper selves to our mental vision. Robert Browning in "Andrea del Sarto" declares that intellectual power unaided by the moral will was responsible for the limitations which the painter saw in his artistic work. He makes the artist say that he sees a truer light of God burning in the work of certain other men, though their talent is feebler than his own.

Fra Angelico painting angels on his knees may not com-

mand your unqualified enthusiasm. But at any rate he had more of the secret of insight than had Andrea del Sarto.

When a critic said to a great artist, "I never saw such a sunset as you have painted," the artist replied, "Do you not wish you had the vision?"

III

The will not only gives health to the mind, it translates into actual, concrete facts what the mind sees. The will bridges the gulf between perceiving the truth and living it. It turns vision into life. The enlightened will moralizes the intellectual outlook. When the intellect sees, and the will does not act upon what the intellect sees, then the intellectual does not become the moral. It does not matter how clear, or original, or accurate, the mental vision may be, it does not become moral reality until the will puts its signature upon it. How much intellectual comprehension never gets down to life! How much interest in religion reaches no further than the intellectual perception of truth! The climax of the interest of some is simply a discussion, an intellectual admission, a recognition of reasonableness. The whole aim of many people is simply to get other people to make certain mental admissions regarding Christianity. And suppose the admission is made, and no translation of it is made by the will into life, how futile it all becomes.

This is the great weakness of a mere apologetic interest in Christ. That, of course, has its own important place, but if the interest is to go no further, then it is of minor importance. A merely intellectual interest in Christ or in Christianity does not raise that interest above the academic. It may not have any more religion in it than an interest in any other purely academic subject. The man who is related to Christian truth only through his brain may be an out and out pagan, and all the more pagan because he keeps such high realities apart from the practical aspect of his life. Let us get away from the idea that mere mental association with even the highest spiritual truth is in itself meritorious. For if it leads us no further, if it is not translated by the will into character and social fact, then it may be that the light in us becomes darkness.

It is a terrible mistake to trifle with spiritual things, to deal in them as a storekeeper deals in his wares, without being

personally related to them. That spells moral degradation. That is professionalism of the rankest kind. When the will refuses to carry out to moral completion the spiritual truth recognized by the mind, such refusal not only reacts damagingly on the will, it reacts in the same way upon the mind. The mental vision in spiritual things has begun to be impaired —not all at once, any more than eyesight becomes impaired all at once—but the process has started. Until the attitude of the will changes upward, a man has spiritually seen his best days. So far as his apprehension of spiritual truth is concerned, he remains the victim of trusting more to his memory of what once was real to him, than to his vision of what is real to him today. Such is the difference between preserved fruit and fruit fresh from the tree. It is like the difference between a moving picture and the actual scene.

It is then as the will continues to translate into life what the enlightened mind sees, that there is given to us the guarantee of more enlightenment of mind. For there is a continual increase of insight issuing from the action of the alert and heroic will. It is our supreme method of spiritual illumination. Such illumination is not merely an extension of the range of our knowledge; it also becomes part of the moral working capital of our personality.

The most urgent problem in the lives of some is to bridge the chasm between intellectual perception and action. Are we ever learning, but never coming to a knowledge of the truth?

CHAPTER VIII

The Imagination in Relation to Christ

DAILY READINGS

Eighth Week, First Day: Imagination as the Pioneer Faculty Upwards

Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen. For therein the elders had witness borne to them.—Heb. 11: 1, 2.

Faith expresses itself in part through the imagination, for it is in the nature of faith to visualize its object, and such visualization is possible through the use of the imagination. The imagination is the highest faculty we possess. And if it is under the highest direction and control it fulfils a sublime function. It is like fire—without control it may work havoc, but, when properly guided, it may perform the greatest service.

Imagination is the power within us which reaches out, which—like the swallow—ventures to another clime. It is not content to live like the chickens around the barnyard. It makes the great venture in business, in exploration, in literature, in science, in art, in everything that is really worth while. Without imagination we would be helpless prisoners in the grip of circumstance. Life would have no poetry, no romance, nothing really picturesque. All that has been achieved which is of permanent worth in the life of the world has been achieved primarily through imagination. Imagination has been the architect of it. And what is imagination? It is the venture of the highest in us.

What would you say to the man who says he has no imagination?

Eighth Week, Second Day: Imagination as the Pioneer Faculty Downwards

And even as they refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up unto a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, hateful to God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents.—Rom. 1: 28-30.

There is no escape from the fact that we possess imagination any more than from the fact of will. We may not use it, or we may make a bad use of it.

When the imagination is under the spell of evil the consequences in human life become appalling. The condition is here mentioned as a "reprobate mind," or, as Dr. Moffatt translates it, "a reprobate instinct." And that is exactly what imagination is when under the influence of evil. It is a sublime instinct become reprobate. It is the highest tumbling to the lowest. It is a fallen angel. *It is the artist in us turned traitor, glorifying the false, and falsifying the glorious.* It reveals to the mind an inverted world. Everywhere and in everything the emphasis is absolutely wrong. The reprobate instinct turns its magic light on the creature rather than upon the creator. It paints in gold and scarlet what should be painted in dark colors. It paints in drab colors that which should be splashed with sunlight. It makes men see each other at their worst instead of at their best. It makes material things appear as the all important, and thereby distils covetousness in human hearts. It intoxicates anger into the spirit of murder. It creates false fears, and false securities. It inspires envy rather than sacrifice.

Such is the natural history of the highest power in us when under the spell of the sinister suggestion, and its goal is utter darkness.

In what things is our imagination playing us false?

Eighth Week, Third Day: The Relation of the Imagination to the Reason and the Will

For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things

that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse: because that, knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.—Rom. 1: 20-22.

Recognizing the imperfection of the analogy, but for the sake of clearness, let us think of the human imagination as the architect of the house of Character, the will as the builder, and the reason as the owner.

In an ill-balanced and bad life, imagination as the architect is under an evil inspiration and makes a bad plan for the house of life. And to add to the mischief, the architect bullies both the builder and the owner, so that they are forced to assist in the base venture. Such is a wicked life.

In an ill-balanced but good life, the imagination as the architect makes a good enough plan, but does not sufficiently consult or cooperate with either the builder or the owner in the making of the plan, and succeeds in compelling both of them to carry out a scheme to which they had given no real sanction. Such may be a fanatical life.

In a well-balanced life, there is a clear understanding between the enlightened imagination as architect, the reason as owner, and the will as builder. Each recognizes the function of the other. They are allies. They are associates. They fulfil their task in their own sphere. The imagination as architect goes ahead and makes the plans with the sanction of the reason as owner. The will as builder puts up the building according to the plan. Such is a well-balanced life.

In what attitude does our imagination live in its association with our will and reason?

Eighth Week, Fourth Day: The Relation of Christ to the Imagination

And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They say unto him, Yea, Lord. Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it done unto you.—Matt. 9: 28, 29.

Christ appeals to our imagination—to the architect, to the pioneer power in us. You say: "No; Christ appeals to faith."

I quite agree. For, as we have said, faith works through imagination. Faith cannot be fully exercised except through imagination. *You cannot exercise faith in anything except as your imagination is at work upon it. This is true not only in our relation to Christ, but in our relation to everything.* It is not Christ alone who calls for faith. Everything to which we are related calls for faith, for the exercise of imagination. For example, if you make an investment your power of explicit reasoning carries you only up to a certain point in the transaction. You must exert your faith, and imagination is the means by which you do it, even in the soundest financial transaction. Every banking house makes an appeal for faith. Every home and every member of it makes an appeal for faith. That train you are to take today makes an appeal for the sound exercise of your imagination.

If you say that you refuse to use your imagination, to exert faith, in your relations with the world in which you live, *then you simply must cease to have any relations with the world.* You thereby cut yourself off from everything and everybody.

When Christ calls for faith, he calls for the highest use of your imagination. *He challenges your imagination to trust him in your approach to the realities of the eternal world.* He appeals to the same imagination that makes ventures in finance, in love, in journeys. He calls upon you to go on with this process of trust, to carry it forward from the visible to the invisible world. He is a candidate for your faith, for the leadership and direction of your imagination.

Do we give our imagination to Christ as we give it to others?

Eighth Week, Fifth Day: The Christian Use of the Imagination

Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, waxed mighty in war, turned to flight armies of aliens.—Heb. 11: 33, 34.

When a man has decided to put up a Gothic structure, his architect puts himself under the spell of the best Gothic examples he knows. He has for the time being, as it were, a Gothic imagination.

So when one surrenders his imagination to the spell of Christ there are certain definite influences exerted by Christ upon the imagination. It is regulated, it is purified, it is redirected, it is inspired. The change in the imagination as a result of the domination of Christ is one of the most momentous of facts. This change carries at the heart of it the most definitely practical results amongst the details of living.

For one thing, Christ inspires the imagination with optimism. He changes the outlook. When he infuses his spirit into the imagination the best is not all in the past. Life has a fresh start. Under his purifying presence the imagination is redeemed from servitude to the base and to the baser self. It rises from the prison house of what is gross into freedom to pursue what is divine. It ascends from a material world to a spiritual universe. It is raised to see more spacious plans for life and service. The ascending imagination gets a world vision of the program of Christ and becomes part of it. It is at home in a universe of mystery, for it has found a guide, it has found a secret, a goal.

It is not confused amidst the paradoxes of life, for it is supported by a great confidence. This Christ-inspired imagination does not escape from this present world, leaving it to its fate. It faces the world's dire need. It brings from eternity the plans of a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. And it sings at its stupendous task of conquest.

Is our imagination exercising the same enterprise in Christ's service as it has done in other things?

Eighth Week, Sixth Day: The Fight of the Christian Imagination

For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Wherefore take up the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand.—Eph. 6: 12, 13.

The battlefield of life is primarily in the imagination. Do you say that such a statement brings the fight into a region of foolish unreality? *I contend that the imagination is in touch with the headquarters of reality. It is the invisible world that*

is the real world, it is the visible world that is the shadow world.

It is the imagination which is the immediate point of contact with the unseen world. And in that unseen world it is the imagination which meets the supreme enemies of human life and destiny.

Unless it has strong reenforcements, imagination is likely to go down under the assault of its foes. The sinister suggestion of discouragement, or of despair, is an intensely practical fact and the conflict between the highest and the lower than the highest goes on every day. The imagination is the battle-ground where two forces contend, and we all know it. This invisible antagonism is the life's blood of history, it is the soul of human experience.

When we are overpowered in this inner struggle we are beaten everywhere. When we are victorious in the realm of imagination we conquer down among the concrete things of the daily round.

It is of more *primary* importance that our imagination should be reenforced by the sustaining power of Christ than that our circumstances should be changed. We do not make light of changed circumstances, but the fountain-head of all change is within ourselves. And the supreme aid that can come to us is Christ's power sustaining and guiding the imagination in its daily struggle.

Is the emphasis of our concern upon a change in our circumstances, or upon a Christ-inspired imagination?

Eighth Week, Seventh Day: The Victory of the Christian Imagination

For whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith. And who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?—I John 5: 4, 5.

When the Christian imagination persists in the conquest of sinister and gross and despairing suggestions, what happens? *This triumphant attitude calls out the reserves within us. It multiplies our strength.* The victorious leader quadruples the power of his followers. The sanguine expectant imagination not only saves the other faculties from paralysis, it summons

them to joyous achievement. This was the attitude of those warriors mentioned in the Scriptures, who under divine inspiration commanded victory. They visualized it through their reenforced personality. This was their secret. They could never have won what they did attain by any other means. This is what the Bible means when it says again and again that victory comes to those who have faith, and this is why it puts the emphasis upon faith—*not because of what faith is in itself, but because of the bond it establishes, because of what issues from the established bond.* When people criticise the persistent Christian emphasis upon faith, they forget to show us something that can effectively take the place of an inspired imagination. For there is no situation in life in which the Christian imagination can be beaten, so long as it is inspired by the conscious presence of the Leader in the campaign for the coming of the Kingdom of God.

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

I

Do you say that all we have been considering is simply a revelation of psychological law which is quite independent of Christ and of our personal relation to Christ? I at once admit that it is psychological law. But psychological description does not cover the whole content of Christian experience. I admit that the electric light which shines in my room comes along a wire. But that is only a part of the truth. It also comes from a power house in the form of a mysterious current which flows along the wire into the room. If there should be a stoppage of the current there would be instantaneous darkness, even although the wire in my room remained intact. The wire and the electricity are counterparts. So are Christ and psychological law counterparts. If you doubt it, then try the psychological law without reference to him and see if you can get the real Christian results.

I am inclined to think that psychological law itself has been revealed to us through Christ. Would we have known apart from Christ the extent to which psychological law operated in the direction of successful living? Is even psychology not indebted to Christianity for light upon the fact of psychological laws? The great inventor does not create mechanical laws, but he may be the first to reveal them and to join them

to practical problems. So while Christ has not created psychological laws, has he not revealed and applied them to life in a way and to a degree no other has done? Have others not learned from the psychological processes of Christian experience facts concerning psychological law that might otherwise not have been known? It is easy to see a psychological process at work, and then to ignore the one who gave that process its significance. But again, would you say that the results of certain psychological forces, used by individuals apart from Christ, are the same as the results of those forces operating in association with Christ?

The answer to that question can be made only by an appeal to actual experience. And for myself I do not know of any human consciousness in the world which is the same as that issuing from spiritual association with Jesus Christ. I have heard no testimony such as issues from fellowship with him. I have recognized no such atmosphere encircling personalities. I have witnessed no such group as those who have a deathless passion for the universal coming of the divine Kingdom. I have seen no such joy in the thick of material disaster; no such hope; no such peace; no such profound moral reconstruction; no such symmetrical proportion of various moral elements. Now it is all very well to say that you can produce these results by other means. The point at present is that it is not done. There are natural pearls and reconstructed pearls and they are wonderfully alike, but they are radically different. There are all kinds of natural precious stones and all kinds of manufactured ones. It is not a question as to whether one is as good as the other, the point is that they are structurally different. Their natural history is different. *And so in regard to psychological phenomena and Christian experience, while they may have many points of resemblance they have a fundamentally different origin.* Why do I say that? Because you cannot have the same psychological results as those flowing from association with Christ, until you create a source that will have all the powers and qualities which we believe Christ to possess. You must construct the equivalent of Christ before you can have anything like the equivalent in experience. Before you could have the psychological result of Christian experience you would require to have a psychological cause large enough for the psychological effects.

II

Besides, the problem is more than a psychological one, it is a moral problem. You cannot settle moral questions merely by psychology. Let one try to settle his bills by subjective psychology and see what happens. Let him try to settle an injury he has done to another person by subjective psychology and he will realize that he is leaving out of the problem the chief factor in it. Our relation to God through Christ rises far beyond psychology. It is a moral relation, and moral issues which far transcend psychology are faced and dealt with and adjusted in the light of a moral order in the universe, and our consciences know it. Psychology does not deal with these issues, it cannot in the very nature of the case. Does the telegraph instrument deal with the international problems it writes out on the message form? Does the telephone deal with the problems it transmits? Neither can subjective psychology deal with problems which immeasurably transcend psychology, inasmuch as we live in a moral and spiritual universe and not merely in psychological states of mind. We live in a universe of personal relationships, and not in a mere condition of hypnotic self-communion.

If psychology were the fundamental explanation of Christian experience, we could not get away from ourselves. It would be the laws of our own being with which we would enter into communion. There would be no self escape. But we are conscious that the soul of our victorious Christian experience consists in our freedom from ourselves, in the objectification of our thoughts outside of and beyond ourselves. *We are most Christian when we are least self-conscious.* Our experience is most profoundly real when we have completely forgotten ourselves. The psychology of Christian experience begins when we have forgotten all about psychology.

III

It is when we respond to the challenge of Christ to have faith in him through the exercise of our imagination that we make the highest use of it. In this way we are introduced to him. Imagination begins the establishment of the relationship. It is so in other relations. Just as we are introduced to Christ through the venture of faith, so we grow in the

knowledge of him. We realize in our relation to him that it is better to trust than to understand. In that attitude the intimacy is deepened. For it is only faith that can deepen a relationship, while suspicion suspends real intimacy. Out of that relationship there come Christian duties to be performed, which also require faith in the doing of them. That is to say, our imagination is inspired both by our relation to Christ and by our relation to the tasks he gives us to do. We enter his presence by faith and we go from his presence to serve him by faith.

It is thus our imagination is educated, disciplined, and bound to Christ, by a double bond of personal attachment and service. *This education of our imagination is of vast importance. For it is by such education that we are able to grow in affection towards Christ and our fellows. Our imagination, resting upon the love of our Lord, inspires sympathy to reciprocate his love.*

Sympathy grows through the upward growth of the imagination. It dies as imagination contracts and decays. When we say that if we could put ourselves in another's place we would be more sympathetic, we simply mean that the exercise of imagination inspires sympathy. When we come to think of it, a large amount of hard-heartedness is simply caused by a lack of the proper use of the imagination. Christ by our association with him and through the tasks he is laying upon us is developing in us, without our thinking about it, that refinement of imagination which inspires sympathy. Our sympathy towards Christ reaches him through imagination awakening it. *We shall never recover that missing note of personal affection towards Christ until our relations with him have more imagination* and less cold-blooded academic calculation. *And we shall not deepen our sympathy with our fellows unless we let more of our imagination out upon their lot.* It is by living over with our fellows their hardships, their poverty, their loneliness, their agony, their longings, that the new day is to come in our world. A Christ-educated imagination will lead us beyond an academic discussion of brotherhood into an actual kinship of awakened, fearless, and self-effacing sympathy.

CHAPTER IX

Some Elements in the Inner Change

DAILY READINGS

Ninth Week, First Day: The Sense of the Love of Christ

That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God.—Eph. 3: 18, 19.

Some people are too much preoccupied to know that they are loved. For in order to know it there must be a certain spirit of recollection. Mental hurry blasts the knowledge of it. When do we know that we are loved? When we make room in our thoughts for the acts of another which reveal it. Sometimes those acts are as plain as a pikestaff, sometimes they are not so obvious. But whatever the actions may be which declare it, we make the fact of our being loved clear to ourselves by some kind of unhurried reflection.

One reason why the love of Christ is not real to many is simply that the mind is in a whirl of continual preoccupation.

But when the thoughts turn towards Christ, when the will and imagination respond to his overtures, there is kindled within us a sense of divine love.

It is not merely a recognition that the attitude of God in Christ is loving. It is that divine love is actually within us, it has become part of our experience. It lays hold upon us. Just as we feel the actual warmth of the sun as we keep our-

selves in the sunshine, so, thinking upon Christ's relation to us, we are changed by the actual contact of divine affection. Our inner coldness of spirit is thawed out. Our fear is dispelled. "Perfect love casteth out fear."

Do we give the divine love an opportunity to reach us?

Ninth Week, Second Day: The Love of Christ as a Supreme Fact

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.—Rom. 8: 35, 37-39.

The one supreme fact in the inner life of a Christian is the divine love. That is the controlling reality. There are a great many other realities of which a Christian is conscious, but they are put in their proper place, into their right relation and proportion, by the great dominating reality.

A Christian is quite aware that he is not morally perfect in himself; he knows that he is exposed to invincible ignorance in some things. He realizes that all kinds of trouble may await him. *But the inner change which has taken place in him is that he has put everything in bondage to the master thought of the love of God in Christ.* He centers his life around that triumphant conviction.

He is possessed by a love which is a cleansing, redeeming force, and it is at work bringing all else into subjection to its sway. Things that in themselves would strike terror, would poison the whole outlook upon life, are turned into a medicine because the chief ingredient is the divine love.

Is the love of Christ or the hostility of circumstances the more influential fact in our experience?

Ninth Week, Third Day: The Renewal of Our Affection

There is no fear in love: but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath punishment; and he that feareth is

not made perfect in love. We love, because he first loved us.—I John 4: 18, 19.

It is a matter of very real concern in the lives of many as to how to increase their love towards Christ, even when obedient to him. There is often a keen sense of failure, after trying hard to arouse affection. But is it not love that begets love? Is it not the contemplation of the divine attitude which renews our own?

All the heat which we have on this planet came from the sun. And all the love which we give back to God came originally from him.

Therefore if our exhausted sympathy is to be revived and refreshed, we must keep ourselves in the love of God. We must often meditate upon that which most definitely and vividly declares to us the compassion of the divine heart. Dr. John Watson (Ian Maclaren) told me that Matthew Arnold, after attending a service at Sefton Park Church on the last day of his life, came in to luncheon while staying at a friend's house, humming the hymn "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross," and said he considered it the most beautiful hymn in the language. That hymn leads the mind to the contemplation of divine love as the inspiration of our own.

Do we let the thought of the love of Christ have a place in the renewal of our love?

Ninth Week, Fourth Day: Christ at Work

For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure.—Phil. 2: 13.

In our physical life we are not conscious of the transformation of food into blood and bone and brain. Nor are we conscious of the law of healing as nature repairs a wound. A great deal happens within us, in the whole range of our complex being, beneath our consciousness of it. We have certain conditions to fulfil, of course, but that is not the point at the moment.

If Christ takes the initiative in the inner spiritual life, then his work begins beneath our consciousness of it. For while he reaches us in part through our consciousness, and while it is obvious we cooperate with him through our consciousness, there is a work to be done in us which is deeper than

that restricted area. There is a work of purification and repair and redirection of which our consciousness is not aware. If our spiritual regeneration were to be only within the scope of that limited section of us of which we are conscious, the outlook would be discouraging.

The physician does not deal merely with the red rash of which the child has told him. And the comfort of it is, that the Physician of our souls is at work upon us deeper than we know, when we trust him, and contemplate him as at work, and give him a free hand.

Ninth Week, Fifth Day: Christ Relating the Life to Its True Environment

So then, my beloved, even as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.—Phil. 2: 12.

Think of life in any of the kingdoms of nature without relationships, seeds without earth, fishes without water, man without society, a mind without a reasonable universe. It would all be meaningless and impossible. The very statement of it is a contradiction. Relationship is the destiny of everything, and most of all is this true of man. Death means the cessation of relationship, life is the expansion of it. And when Christ has the right of way in a life, he begins to rescue it from partial existence, and to liberate it to find correspondence with its normal human environment. For most people have not established connections with the full scope of their environment, and consequently are only partially alive. Our full environment may be said to be fourfold—a relation to God, to the facts of providence, to self, and to humanity.

Christ working in us binds us to God. He reconciles us to the realities of life through faith in the fact that no hostility of circumstances can destroy our essential life. He relates us to ourselves by giving us a motive in living, great enough to unify the scattered elements of our inner being. He brings us into normal relation to our fellows by creating a love sufficient to maintain the contact. Christ's opportunity in us, while on the one hand it may start beneath consciousness, on the other hand urges us to make full connections with the universe outside of ourselves.

Ninth Week, Sixth Day: Christ Releasing from Slavery to the World

And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.—Rom. 12: 2.

People live in a variety of mental attitudes towards the spirit of the world, towards its pride, its ambitions, its pleasures, and its prizes. *Some have surrendered to the temper of the world,* they have become part of it. *Others have fled from it by mental or social isolation, or both.* They are neither of the world nor in the world. *Many others have made a compromise* between these two extremes. They are half in and half out of the world. But the Christian way is neither surrender, nor retreat, nor compromise. It is to stay right in the thick of human affairs, but without conforming to the spirit of the world—to be in it, and very much in it, and yet not of it; to live in genial human contacts; to retain a zest for life; and yet to live beyond the petty, self-centered aims of a passing show. How is it to be done?

By Christ renewing the mind, by the continual bathing of the thoughts in his presence. As the body is renewed by food and sleep, so we may come back to the world with renewed enthusiasms and purified ambitions in the presence of our Lord. For the spirit of worldliness or unworldliness is an attitude of mind. And it is only in the Changeless Presence that the mind can be raised above a changing world.

Ninth Week, Seventh Day: The New Patience

Knowing that the proving of your faith worketh patience. And let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing.—James 1: 3, 4.

It is when men lose confidence in leadership that they grow impatient. But a great trust in a leader means great patience in tribulation. So the intimate, personal leadership of Christ, when it is real to us, gives the secret of patient endurance. For he gives the light necessary to make patience intelligible. *We can endure when we are able to trust the motive of our leader,* when we can rely upon his judgment, when we are

sure of his comradeship, and when we believe in the worth of his final aims. This is really the heart of patience, to live in the spirit of the broad view, to look at single events as parts of a whole. In that attitude it is perfectly natural to hear a man say: "All things work together for good." Without that attitude it is not astonishing to hear a man say like Jacob: "All these things are against me." Faith in Christ then means patience, and patience is the guarantee of much more that grows out of it. It becomes the creator of most valuable by-products in the realm of character. "In your patience ye shall win your souls."

Let us not forget that Christian patience is an active as well as a passive virtue. It covers the work of an athlete on the field as well as the endurance of an invalid in the sick room. And heroism may be a finer thing when it endures without the inspiration of an audience.

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

I

There must inevitably be a great inner change in the life of a Christian under the leadership of Christ because there is no other such leader. There is nowhere such an embodiment as is found in Christ of what human life requires in order to realize its true destiny. It is not enough according to historical Christianity to say we may have the leadership of God apart from Christ. For Christ answers the human need for a leadership which mediates God to the soul. Men demand a leadership which meets them on the human level. And of all such leaders Christ is supreme not only because of the content of his message, but because of his abiding presence to lead the world.

History has shown how inadequate the highest human leadership has been for long stretches of time, when men cried out for satisfaction in the deepest things of life. Even in your own experience your memory may be the grave of a dozen dead leaders, whom you have outgrown. Each has guided you through a phase, a period, but you outlived him, for he led you only in one aspect of life. We all have seen how the masterful spirit who has swept his followers off their feet for a time was in jeopardy every hour—a false step, and his power has died in a day. But even when the leader of yes-

terday fails to meet the present situation the human instinct for leadership remains. Was this ever more evident than in the life of today? Do you realize how many confident voices have been silenced by the terrible irony of events? We are not so sure now that this or that theorist has the vision for the world's needs. The fact is, ours is a disillusioned world, we live in a period when leader after leader has fallen under suspicion and into ominous silence. New knowledge which men hoped would lead them has deepened their perplexity. Social unrest has awakened a deeper craving for inner tranquillity. The problems of the future bewilder the most intrepid intellect. The most astute mind can only feel his way along a path the world's life has never before trodden. The problems of tomorrow are too vast, and complicated, and beyond historical precedent for the highest groups of specialized human intelligence. At their best and bravest and wisest, they can only guess and hope and wait. Therefore if Christ is what Christians believe him to be, if he is what he has professed to be, if he is what questioning, groping men faintly hope he may turn out to be to this modern world, when he gets a square chance such as he has not yet had—then those who believe they have received him must have a definite advantage over others who do not so believe. They must have a conviction others have not, a confidence, a power, a message, others have not.

II

The inner change wrought by Christ is distinctly a fundamental change. It strikes at the roots of life. It awakens, and disturbs, and challenges what is disturbed by no other influence. So much in a life can remain asleep until Christ enters. So much in us can talk back till Christ comes. But when the Master gets possession, there is a solemn arraignment of formerly undisturbed inner conditions. There is a fundamental thoroughness about Christ's relation to our lives which is startlingly practical. It goes to the very heart of human weakness and failure; it is inconceivable that any probe could reach deeper. No other contact with human condition approaches the searching reality of the touch of Christ. He deals with the very next thought of the mind, giving it steadiness and a new purpose. He deals with the task we have in hand at the moment and gives a higher motive for its

accomplishment. He seeks out the unconfessed wrong, the unsubdued mental vagrancy. The neglected dust-covered corners of life are swept by light from his presence. Not in anger, but with the supremely compassionate purpose of inner renewal, he reaches the inmost recesses of human life. Is there any other such moral overture made to mankind which so penetrates to the innermost zone of moral consciousness? If not, can there be any change so radical as that which is effected by Christ? Do not say it is not often done. That is not Christ's fault. It is done when Christ gets a free hand, and we know it. The point here is that real Christianity meets the fundamental moral situation. Christ reaches down to the lowest depths of the human state and begins the work of recovery, so that the worst man who ever lived may find himself through the healing ministry back in conscious union with God. If there is no other contact which reaches the moral quick as Christ reaches it, then there can be no such upward change in men as he achieves. Think of the variety of all the other influences which appeal to us for considération —how superficial is their healing touch. Think of all the other messages—how shallow is their moral diagnosis. But Christ plumbs the depths, not to condemn but to rescue and restore.

III

The inner change means that everything touching the life may be assimilated into spiritual power. As abounding physical health conquers the seeds of disease which might otherwise prove fatal, so Christ's abundant life enables the Christian soul to become more than a conqueror in relation to the antagonisms of the world. As the tree with its roots struck deep into the earth is able to draw from it such nourishment as to thrive upon the elemental storms, so the life of Christ in men is the guarantee of survival and growth amidst the storms of life. It is not only that no harm can come when he nourishes the human spirit; it is also that everything conspires to make it more Christlike. It is not conquest merely, it is more than conquest. Many things cannot be conquered. What men call tragedies and trifles cannot be conquered. That is to say, we cannot escape them. We cannot escape the pin pricks of a petty soul any more than we can escape the shadows of death. But we can more than conquer them. The

antagonisms which pursue us may be tamed into elements of personal growth. Through Christ everything in the universe may become sacramental to the soul in unison with him. Nothing can separate, nothing can destroy, nothing can really injure—nothing but our own wayward will.

IV

The inner change through the reign of Christ in the human spirit is fundamentally *a change in moral tendency*—a new tendency in the direction of being and not merely in appearing to be; of purifying motive as well as action; revaluating success as giving and not as getting; emphasizing quality in actions rather than bulk or quantity; communicating spiritual reality as fundamentally important. This change in inner tendency is at first an invisible thing, and even when visible it is still in the disguise of being an uninfluential thing. This new Christian tendency in life can never be estimated at its real worth, for men are looking for the materially impressive, for certain preconceived marks of greatness and importance. They are looking for bigness, gilt and glitter, impressive names, and the outward show which they think must always accompany power. For we are still in the kindergarten as to the recognition of spiritual reality. And because of this, Christian people are supremely tempted to answer men's expectations by substituting the show of things for the realities. Is not this just the point at which Christianity has again and again surrendered to the expectations of the carnal mind and has in consequence been shorn of its power?

If Christians are to give Christ his chance in our day for the remaking of society, must it not be through a return to a reemphasis of what is really spiritual progress? Why should we shape our lives according to the roar in the street instead of daring to live according to the mind of Christ? Does it not seem that the supreme need for the new day which is at hand is for us as Christian people really to risk the mind of Christ amid the facts of life; to cease to follow and to begin to lead, not in the spirit of self-aggression, but in obedience to the tendencies of the indwelling life of Christ? Who will say the Church has been leading? She may have been politic, but has she been powerful?

CHAPTER X

The Release from Anxiety

DAILY READINGS

Tenth Week, First Day: The Fact of Anxiety

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. —Matt. 6: 24.

When two forces cancel each other, whether it be in a boat where two men row in opposite directions, or in a life in which two opposite ambitions tend to paralyze each other, there is a condition which may be called anxious. For there can be no real progress, while there may be a great deal of effort. There can be no real satisfaction, although there may be a vast longing to secure it. There can be no joy, although this double position may be the blind way of trying to attain it.

The secret of the unrest and unhappiness in many a life is this attempt to have two dominating purposes, two conflicting ideals, reigning in the mind at the same time. There is a continual, or periodic, shifting from one aim to the other. It is a condition of being neither cold nor hot, the condition of the Laodiceans. "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot." If one or other of the aims were to surrender, then there would be comparative rest. The fact is, a purely worldly person may have more real satisfaction of a kind than one who is in a continual attitude of compromise. *We are so constituted that our life must be dominated by one ruling passion. It may have very many interests, but not two contending motives.*

How may we begin now to have one dominating motive?

Tenth Week, Second Day: Causes of the Anxious Attitude

And there ariseth a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the boat, insomuch that the boat was now filling. And he himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion: and they awake him, and say unto him, Teacher, carest thou not that we perish? And he awoke and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And he said unto them, Why are ye fearful? have ye not yet faith? And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?—Mark 4: 37-41.

One cause of having two convicting ideals, or aims, is a false idea of our responsibility. A great many people think that certain very important things in life are in their own hands, and that they must look after them. They carry a burden which God never intended they should carry. Consequently they became anxious; they are not merely concerned with doing what they have in hand with all their might, but they worry about the consequences of it. For example, a politician may know what he ought to do, but he worries how it will affect votes. A preacher may know what he ought to say, but he also becomes greatly concerned as to how people will take it. One has a certain duty, but he keeps wondering as to how much happiness is coming out of the doing of it. Living partly in the thing now to be done, and partly in the consequences of doing it, is a frequent cause of being harried by two dominating motives. *And the cause of this condition may be fear,* a fear of individuals, or of the world, or of the forces of nature. Fear arises from the picturing of a disastrous result. One who fears is trying to do his work, but he is also under the cruel lash of what is going to happen. He is permitting his imagination to visualize discouraging and paralyzing consequences, while the rest of him is trying to push on with the task. In this way one's greatest enemy is within the household of his own bisected personality.

What most frequently causes us anxiety?

Tenth Week, Third Day: The Unanxious Attitude

And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there:

save that the Holy Spirit testifieth unto me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But I hold not my life of any account as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.—Acts 20: 22-24.

A Christian is in an unanxious attitude, when his whole personality is focused upon doing the will of Christ. The mind, resolutely refusing to be taken up with irrelevant suggestions or secondary considerations, steadily moves forward to achieve its task, with oneness of aim, concentration of purpose, passionate absorption in the mind of Christ. "This one thing I do." Things right enough in themselves have been pushed to one side in the meantime. They do not count for the moment. They are not in the immediate calculation. They must take their chances later on for weal or woe. Meanwhile, it is one thing at a time. "I can do no other, so help me God."

In this attitude there is the courageous running of risks concerning everything except the will of Christ. Just as freight trains must wait at sidings, and automobiles at crossings, and linemen must stand by the side of the railway, till the express sweeps past, so in the Christian unanxious attitude there is one supreme purpose which has the right of way.

This bearing carries at the heart of it a great joy and peace and power. The whole of life is thereby automatically simplified. *That does not mean fewness of interests—there may be an increasing number, one may be making the most complex connections with the needs of the world—but there is only one fundamental concern.*

What is one of the immediate results of this attitude?

Tenth Week, Fourth Day: What the Unanxious Attitude Does Not Mean

To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles; straightway I conferred not with flesh and blood: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them that were apostles before me: but I went away into Arabia; and again I returned unto Damascus.

Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and tarried with him fifteen days.—Gal. 1: 16-18.

The only point I wish to emphasize here is that *the Christian unanxious attitude does not imply the absence of plans for the future.* There are some who vindicate themselves in a policy of happy-go-lucky carelessness. The result is that other people besides themselves have to suffer for their false interpretations of Christ. They are slipshod, unpunctual, or it may be they do not believe in such a thing as insurance, or in any settled plans whatsoever. That is not the fulfilment of the mind of Christ—it is the delusion of a mood. Christ's whole relation to the world has a definite comprehensive plan at the heart of it. And he has had a cosmic plan in the process of being fulfilled by his disciples, stretching from age to age. Besides, the very relation of Christ to the human mind implies the making of clear, wise plans, because he is always insisting upon concentration of mind, and that upon which he challenges our concentration is part of a plan. His is not a disconnected, unrelated suggestion. *The enemy of a plan is not a concentrated mind, but a muddled mind,* a mind becoming the victim of stray impressions. The mind which refuses to be amenable to a plan is likely to be one which has thrown over the rigors of discipline.

On the other hand, let us bear in mind at the same time while the healthy Christian mind may recognize the place of plans in life he may not submit to your plan, or mine. We may not coerce our fellows into subjection to our scheme. One is Master, even Christ.

Are plans or the mind of Christ primary?

Tenth Week, Fifth Day: Unanxious Regarding Spiritual Growth

For which cause I suffer also these things: yet I am not ashamed; for I know him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day.—II Tim. 1: 12.

When a farmer fulfils the conditions, it is the business of nature to produce the harvest. He clearly recognizes the limits of his responsibility. A child who plants a seed in a flower pot, on the other hand, interferes with nature by digging up the seed an hour or two afterwards to see if it is growing. *Paul was like the farmer, he left the problem of the growth of his spiritual life in the hands of his Lord, while he in perfect*

confidence went about his particular business of fulfilling the conditions. He carried the burden Christ gave him, and he left the burden that was not his to Him who had pledged himself to carry it. When one lives in this relation to Christ, he is thereby free from worrying about his soul and its growth. He does not think his spiritual development is a small matter, it is because it is so vastly important that he puts the problem in other hands than his own—just as you transfer the keeping of valuables from your own care to the custody of another.

But there are some who are like the child, they still carry the burden for their spiritual growth even after they have fulfilled the conditions of worship and obedience. The consequence is they are never particularly joyous people, for they are constantly worried as to how their souls are getting along. They are all the time searching for symptoms as to how they are progressing spiritually. They take their spiritual temperature, then feel their spiritual pulse, and when that sort of thing goes on for a while they lose heart. For this hectic condition stops the growth of their souls.

If many earnest people would leave the growth of their souls in the keeping of the Lord of life, they would have more freedom to serve with gladness of heart.

When may the unanxious attitude regarding spiritual growth be practiced?

Tenth Week, Sixth Day: Unanxious Regarding Influence

Here, moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing against myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. Wherefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall each man have his praise from God.—I Cor. 4: 2-5.

To be concerned about fidelity is one thing, to be anxious about influence is another thing. Influence of the right sort is always a by-product of fidelity. Of course, we are not here

discussing that type of so-called influence which issues from pulling all kinds of strings. The influence of which we are thinking is that glorious product which haunts a life unconscious of itself in the service of the Master.

It is a precious, beautiful, powerful thing. But Christ takes charge of it, he fosters it, he protects it. The Christian disciple dare not try to meddle with it. It is not his affair. Whenever he touches it he soils it. There are some good people who do not realize that influence is something which is not in their keeping. Consequently they are burdened by the appalling anxiety to make an impression—not necessarily in a conceited way, but it may be simply in an over-zealous attempt to reach others for good. They try too hard. They may become artificially unctuous. They may be extravagantly and oppressively sympathetic. They exhaust people. What is the matter? They are not leaving anything for Christ to do. They think the whole burden of fidelity and the creation of influence rests upon them. It is a frightful strain. *The strain of anxiety for influence is self-imposed.* It is not the result of faith, but of unbelief in the vigilant activity of Christ. Christ never imposed so galling a burden. His yoke is easy. His burden is light.

Have we been more concerned for influence or for fidelity?

Tenth Week, Seventh Day: Unanxious Regarding Happiness

Howbeit what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ. Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ.—Phil. 3: 7, 8.

The highest type of Christians have been the most joyous people in the world; nothing in all literature compares with the story of their triumphant gladness of heart in the midst of the most hostile circumstances. The secret of it is that they lost sight of the thought of happiness, their thoughts lay in an entirely different direction. They sought Christ and his will, encountering in that quest *the appearance* of all kinds of unhappiness. If they had trusted *appearances* they would have said "good-by" to happiness for ever. But none of those

things moved them. By losing their lives they found them, by scorning the pursuit of happiness they discovered the fountain-head of it.

The vast majority have not yet learned the great secret *that happiness, like influence, is a by-product.* Consequently they are still pursuing it along the highway of appearances, and none are more disillusioned than those who have made it their supreme business to hunt for happiness. For it can never be caught. Besides, it wears a disguise. Men shrink from that disguise. It looks forbidding. Even a philosopher like Plato could not see that life's highest joys came through self-sacrifice.

The Christian testimony is, that in self-effacing attachment to the mind of Christ the purest kind of satisfaction flings itself upon those who have ignored and forgotten the thirst for happiness.

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

I

When we stray from Christ anxiety deepens and one of the commonest, and most practical, forms of it is concerning the future. How shall the difficult task be achieved tomorrow? Dare one take the right step without apprehension as to the consequences? A strange undefined fear steals over the personality like a biting blast from the North. It moans through the hours of the night, it whistles through the duties of the day. It descends upon the garden of life like frost-bite upon the fair promises of fruit. It might be a bracing tonic if it aroused sluggish energies. But the pity of it is that the anxious man is already weakened by tomorrow before he sees it. Tomorrow has injured or destroyed his today. Anxiety over what is coming has taken the reality out of what is in hand. There can be no clear light upon the next step until there is concentration upon what one is now doing. There can be no future until there is a definite present to which one gives his soul. This hour belongs to us, and if we do not possess it, we shall possess no other.

Anxiety defeats the very end it has in view—it not only robs us of our preparation to accomplish what awaits us, but it consumes the interest and power demanded by the pressing needs of the moment.

But the presence of Christ dominating the mind in the present guards the personality against the invasion of tomorrow. *He and his will are our tomorrow.* And in that attitude we have both present victory and the promise of future achievement. Christ preserves and focuses the energies in the present, which is the supreme preparation for whatever may happen. The person who is waiting for something to turn up cannot really be prepared for what may present itself, while he who is turning up something in the present is being equipped for the next thing. When we pursue our own anxious way we are simply rushing into collision with the divine order, with the most damaging consequences; whereas when we recognize that the future is not our burden but our Leader's, we move in the rhythm of the divine purpose.

II

Of course, this unanxious attitude towards our spiritual growth, our influence, our happiness, and our future presupposes some clear convictions. It implies that we are definitely fulfilling those conditions which give us the right to trust Christ confidently to do his great part in us and through us. It implies that we have firmly assured ourselves that we are not living in a fool's paradise of mere apathetic unconcern, making the vice of indifference to appear as the virtue of invincible faith. This glorious outlook of the Christian soul takes for granted that Christ is increasingly real to us. We are becoming more intimate with him; the friendship, on the whole, is growing. We are taking the time to cultivate it. Meditation, prayer, worship on the one hand, and obedience to our Master's will in the detail of daily life, are recognized as the fundamental facts in the relationship. Without this, the unanxious attitude becomes presumption. It becomes the equivalent of casting ourselves down from the pinnacle of the Temple and trusting that he will give his angels charge concerning us. Trust has vast privileges, but it has simple duties. It can look its Lord straight in the face only as it does its part, or, having failed in doing its part, comes back in penitence to begin afresh. But Christ will not lend himself to a one-sided attitude. Ethical reality is the life's blood of the gracious and spiritual bond between him and ourselves. Let us never forget that spiritual relations are

not the substitute for ethical relations—they are the transfiguration of them. Divine grace is not a good-natured ethical surrender on the part of our Lord. "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid." Christ takes charge of those burdens which make us heavy with anxiety, not to liberate us from moral obligation, but in order thereby to make our fulfilment of his will all the more a triumphant moral achievement. The government looks after the equipment of a soldier, not that he may lie down in indolence, but that he may all the better with freedom of action fulfil his destiny.

The unanxious relation to Christ concerning spiritual growth, influence, happiness, and the future implies that there is one creative reality which is the maker and protector of these other created realities.

The creative reality being His presence and will in us, it is our business to give this reality its opportunity to produce its own fruit. We cannot make fruit, but we can cooperate with nature in producing it. I see great clusters of grapes silently growing outside, but not all the skill of mankind could *directly create* one of them. And yet we try to create greater things than grapes. Just as nature will do for us in the richest abundance what we cannot possibly do for ourselves, so will Christ do for us when we recognize that it is his function and not ours. But we confuse the situation. We assume responsibility for the spiritual fruit as well as root of our lives, so that what nature does in a garden Christ is hindered from doing in a character. We try to manufacture fruit instead of letting it grow. Besides assuming the responsibility which legitimately belongs to us, we meddle with a problem that is immeasurably beyond us.

This simply means that there are many important issues in life, but one main issue. There is one primary fact out of which the rest naturally emerge. The fireman on a locomotive sees that there is enough water in the boiler and that the coal is glowing in the furnace, and steam power is the result. Nature looks after the production of steam. The fireman looks after the conditions to be fulfilled. And as nature never fails, so Christ will not fail in the part he has pledged himself to play.

This unanxious attitude further implies that we are prepared to bide Christ's time for the complete vindication of

our trust that he is doing his part. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." We do not see our souls growing, and we may not feel them progressing. Nevertheless, if we really have committed them to him we have perfect confidence that, as we fulfil conditions, they are flourishing under his care. We are trusting him, not our symptoms. We are walking by faith and not by sight. You do not see the securities you have placed in a safe deposit vault. You do not consult your feelings as to whether they are safe. You simply trust, on reasonable guarantees, and that is the sole basis of your patient, waiting confidence. So in regard to the growth of our souls, we are confident that when he shall appear we shall be like him. "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness."

Our influence, too, through abiding in him may not appear to amount to much. If we judged it according to appearances, we might be greatly discouraged. But appearances are not necessarily facts. Far greater men have been undiscouraged by appearances. If Paul had worried about the outward appearances of his influence among men, it would have broken his great heart. It would have frozen over his enthusiasm. But he committed the care of his influence to his Master, and went about the concerns that belonged to him. How many sleepless nights good people might be spared if they left the keeping of their influence where it belonged, and were unmoved by appearances. "He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light."

III

The consequences of the unanxious attitude are far-reaching beyond words, and in many directions. We have hardly any conception as to how we arrest our spiritual development by our unwarrantable meddlings with ourselves. Morbid self-suspicion and self-analysis work havoc in spiritual as well as in physical health. But the unanxious bearing gives Christ the opportunity in which he glories. It is in this way we leave ourselves in his care. He gets on with his work, and continuity of growth becomes possible. It is like allowing seeds to remain at rest in the ground in the grip of nature, instead of driving a harrow over them, uprooting them. There is a

new epoch of normal, continuous, quiet progress awaiting a new implicit trust that there is Another on the inner problem besides ourselves.

It is also in this way that joyousness has its opportunity to rise within. It is ghostly fear which silences the instinctive songs of the soul. There are tides of gladness within us whose waves never refresh the personality into newness of strength, because they are held back by barriers of futile anxiety. There is so much of the joy of the Lord within us awaiting the opportunity to express itself in ways that would make for more power and delight in living, even among the most difficult circumstances. When the spell of anxious repression is withdrawn there rises out of the silence a new song, like that of a skylark which has escaped from a harsh hand.

The tragedy in the soul's history of many good people is that they are living in the winter of their discontent, when they might be living in the springtime of a glorious experience. If only the clouds of distrust were broken, new graces of character would flower in the sunlight of Christ's presence, as blossoms cover the branches of the tree that only yesterday were bare and without promise. And, as apostolic life bears witness, this is possible not merely in aloofness from the work of the world, but in the thick of the struggle. There are thousands of men and women today who know the meaning of casting all their care upon Him, in the midst of sorrow upon sorrow, who never knew the meaning of it in all the sheltered, prosperous, peaceful past.

CHAPTER XI

The Economic Value of the New Life

DAILY READINGS

Eleventh Week, First Day: The New Simplicity of Desire

Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know also how to abound: in everything and in all things have I learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want.—Phil. 4: 11, 12.

Real Christianity in a life tends towards the reduction of physical cravings—not in an ascetic sense, but through transformed interest. It creates a shrinkage in certain appetites. For example, it counteracts gluttony, tippling, impure desire, indolence. It shifts the emphasis of desire away from physical impulses, and tends to place the emphasis elsewhere. That is to say, when one lives in genuine fellowship with Christ, there takes place a readjustment of his economic value.

When he lived apart from Christ he demanded more from society than he now claims. It may be he demanded more than he gave, which, of course, is economically unsound. At any rate, in every personality where Christ gets his way, there is a continual movement towards the simplification of certain forms of desire. If every man lived as the instincts of the divine life urge, there would be an immediate change in the entire economic situation. I do not mean to infer that all the change that should come has come. *But can there be any permanent solution of economic conditions without clearly facing the problem of the fundamental readjustment of the*

individual to the whole? And this is something which can take place today. While other questions are under discussion, there are immediate practical changes which may take place within our own lives, without which every other change on the outside must prove to be futile.

Eleventh Week, Second Day: The New Humility

Doing nothing through faction or through vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself; not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others.—Phil. 2: 3, 4.

Christian humility is the opposite of self-consciousness. There is a spurious humility which is self-conscious and it may express itself outwardly in the form of slovenly shabbiness or by a certain type of dress or way of living. True humility makes no display of self by one kind of ostentation or another. It does not call attention to itself. The thoughts of the humble mind have been captured by Christ in an enthusiasm to forget self in following him. It does not cringe, for the cringing temper is painfully self-conscious. *Humility in this majestic attitude of freedom from the thought of self realizes a far-reaching economic result.* For the really humble do not complicate the social situation by mere display in clothes, or in anything else. The motive for display has been converted and absorbed into higher ends. *Thus genuine humility tends to enable a person to give to society more than he asks from it.* Is there anything which complicates the social situation more than personal pride? Is there anything which is so hungry for still more upon which to feed its antisocial appetite? Is there anything which so introduces trouble into the social fabric as trying to conquer other people by an attitude of ostentatious display? There can be no adequate approach to social equilibrium until we learn the meaning of the words, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

Eleventh Week, Third Day: The New Efficiency

That ye put away, as concerning your former manner of life, the old man, that waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit; and that ye be renewed in the spirit of your mind,

and put on the new man, that after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth.—Eph. 4: 22-24.

Christ does for the Christian mind two things among many others which have an economic significance. He concentrates the thoughts, and he encourages the mind to think through its problems. For he is continually guarding the mind against surrender to mere distraction and curiosity. Mental concentration and continuance have a great deal to do with efficiency and thoroughness. When we sift economic unprofitableness down to its foundation, we discover that it arises in a large degree from lack of those two qualities. There is infinitely greater economic loss through mental inattention and shiftiness than through lack of talent.

The steadied mind summons the whole personality to its task, and finishes it. It is the enemy of loose ends. It is the sworn foe of indolent dreaming. If that attitude of mind could be guaranteed in every worker, think of the great economic increase of work. Think of the loss that might never take place through fires, breakage, accidents of all kinds, expensive blunders, and what not. Think of the things that would not require to be done over again, by those who must follow up the careless. Besides, there is the contagion of carelessness, and happily the contagion of efficient thoroughness.

Do I render to my duties that concentration and thoroughness which make for economic soundness?

Eleventh Week, Fourth Day: The New Conscientiousness

Wherefore, putting away falsehood, speak ye truth each one with his neighbor: for we are members one of another. Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need.—Eph. 4: 25-28.

A Christian conscience can do in a business what time locks, detectives, superintendents, and auditors cannot search out. It can fundamentally do more than legislation, for it first of all gets after the legislator, and it follows up his legislation

as no policeman can do. It can get more into the heart of things than the X-ray machine. It can penetrate further into a problem than any human contrivance. It can keep shoddy out of materials, adulteration out of food, water out of stock, doubleness out of life, eye-service out of working hours. It can keep injustice out of the board room and the workroom.

Granting that there is need for social renewal, is there anything in the social fabric which can take the place of a new personal conscientiousness? There must always be disease spots in the body politic where conscience does not reign in life.

Let us recognize and honor the economic service which men and women render, who, in their present lot, are living up to and beyond the moral standards and conventions of their surroundings. They are doing their part in laying the foundations for a better social order, without which no social order can endure.

Are we thus working at the center as well as the circumference of social facts?

Eleventh Week, Fifth Day: The New Ambition

But it is not so among you: but whosoever would become great among you, shall be your minister; and whosoever would be first among you, shall be servant of all. For the Son of man also came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.—Mark 10: 43-45.

There is vast need for us to find an aim in life that will be sufficiently powerful to command the fullest energy of the human faculties and that at the same time will make for the fullest social justice to our fellows. We are surely passing beyond an individualism which has honored individual success without considering the economic injustice it may have wrought.

Christ has a great place for the expansion of personality through a sublime aim, but he has no place for personal ambition which tends to make equality of opportunity impossible.

The Christian ambition is not to "get on"—it is to serve, and to serve, having the glory of God as a supreme motive. Such service will probably "get on." But the point is that Christ seeks to rearrange our emphasis. He seeks to make

life's supreme glory to consist in serving and not in being served, in self-sacrifice and not in what one has amassed or seeks to amass—whether it be a fortune or fame or power. The ambition which puts any personal advantage in front of service is anti-Christian, it is economically unsound. It does not matter whether it be in an individual life, a church, or a business.

Is my secret ambition economically sound?

Eleventh Week, Sixth Day: The New Health

And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you.—Rom. 8: 10, 11.

While some great saints have been great invalids, at the same time the presence of Christ in a life impels toward the increase of physical health. For there is a direct tendency towards health in the control of physical cravings. Think of the vast shrinkage in sickness that would take place if physical appetites were really under divine influence. The regulation of the thoughts which Christ seeks to direct into channels of healthymindedness has a far-reaching implication towards physical health.

More than one nerve specialist has told me that his great difficulty with many patients is the problem of uncontrolled thought. The absence of fear, the casting out of anxiety, the curbing of unrest arising from unbridled ambition, all make for health. The sense of forgiveness and of the divine presence and power, the sanguine spirit, the steadied imagination, communicate tone even to the body.

The conquering spiritual energy which wrestles with indolence, moods, and discouragements, and the faith which lays hold upon spiritual power, literally quicken the mortal body. The spiritual life, dominating and reenforcing the physical life, thereby proclaims such ascendancy to be a great economic asset.

Does my Christianity get sufficient opportunity to express itself in terms of physical health?

Eleventh Week, Seventh Day: The New Comprehensive Economic Value

For bodily exercise is profitable for a little; but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come. Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptation. For to this end we labor and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of them that believe.—I Tim. 4: 8-10.

The really spiritual life tends to express itself in an all-round practical efficiency. The whole movement of the divine life in the human spirit is in the direction of increasing one's social value in every direction. There is nothing which can take its place, when the all-inclusiveness of the Christian impulse is considered. For the influence of Christ is a consistent whole. It does not cancel at one point what it emphasizes at another, like a non-spiritual efficiency, which may be brilliant but unscrupulous, concentrated but cruelly ambitious.

The economic value of a non-religious efficiency in one direction may be completely discounted by lack of conscience in another. It may be far more than discounted; the result in this sum of economic subtraction may be an alarming minus quantity. That is why the public is becoming more and more inquisitive regarding the other side of the question of a man's public philanthropy.

But where Christ reigns there will be a balance, a proportion, a consistency, in the economic contribution. If Christ gets the chance he seeks in a life, it becomes the seed plot of symmetrical economic progress.

Is my life consistent in its economic relationships?

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

I

If the spiritually careless man could see how far-reaching were the social effects of his carelessness, he would have a new motive for spiritual concern. At present too many see it to be merely a matter of their own business whether they pray, or cultivate in any way relations with the eternal world. They think nobody is affected but themselves in the attitude which they take up. But of course this is not the case. If

spiritual living has an economic value, then the lack of it is a distinct economic loss.

Every prayerless life, and every prayerless day, work out badly for society. Every spiritual disobedience is a handicap upon the practical life of the world. For example, whenever a man comes to the breakfast table without previous devotional refreshment, he is more liable to uncertain moods, to ill-temper, to complaining, to depression and discouragement. He affects the whole household. He goes out having his personality out of tune with the highest progress, and that attitude consciously or unconsciously goes into what he does, and how he does it, and the seeds of it are sown broadcast. There is no human mathematics which can compute the blighting influence of a personality out of relation with the divine mind. That such influence has serious economic consequences is beyond question. Would you say that one who discouraged others through lack of personal faith and optimism did not work against their economic efficiency? You have only to consider how discouragement has affected your own life. It reduced your working power. It clouded your mental vision. It robbed you of the joy which was a distinct element in your moral capital. That discouragement actually reduced your economic output.

When you consider the case of a positively bad life, in which overt acts reach others with damaging effectiveness, then the uneconomic consequences become frightful. There is let loose upon society that which becomes an increasing social burden, piling up the sum of human misery.

If the natural history of an evil act could be clearly followed, and revealed to the evildoer's intelligence, as its activity still goes forward into the life of the world long after he has forgotten it, there would be started a new train of thought in his mind regarding the relation between individual spiritual condition and the practical corporate life of mankind.

II

But in considering the economic bearing of the individual life, it is not enough to be content with the fulfilment of certain religious practices. It is possible for one to read the Bible and to pray and yet to come before the world with an unrenewed personality. That is why some have lost faith in

th: devotional aspect of life. They have not observed that it has made much difference in the conduct of their friends. Of course, the trouble is that some people simply make those acts of religious practice ends in themselves, and consequently defeat Christ in his aim to reach and renew the inner life. Christ's actual power does not get its opportunity to reach the character. The vital contact has not been made. The husk has been taken for the kernel. The scaffolding has been substituted for the building. The form has been mistaken for the power. The result is that at least two wrongs have been perpetrated. *The life has not been renewed.* It has been cheated out of its spiritual refreshment. *It has failed to receive its equipment for making its full economic contribution. And, besides, people are watching who have thus been robbed of their faith in the practical value of the spiritual life.*

It is therefore of the most urgent and vital importance that professing Christian people press beyond the vestibule of spiritual reality to the presence of Christ, if their lives are to possess that economic value Christ meant them to impart. *For there is no final economic value in mere religiosity. The divine life must reach us at the focus point of our character.* The actual spiritual power must reach our weakness.

There is no substitute for the infusion of divine life into the human spirit. Christianity must be real there or it can be real nowhere. That is the climax of all its history and machinery. That is the fountain-head of its social renewal.

III

Jesus put the supreme emphasis for the coming of the Kingdom of God upon the spiritually renewed individual, and not only the individual but the individual leader.

He looked to an inner circle of regenerated persons whom he instructed to be leaders and he trusted them as the supreme means whereby all change should be effected.

The reformer who says he puts the *supreme* emphasis for his hope of social change upon social conditions, *contradicts his own position,* for he makes his protest as an individual. For it is only as individuals like himself reach social conditions that there can be change. *Without the individual leaders to realize it, there is no real social progress.* That is surely a

matter of historic fact. So then Christ's method of expecting advance to come *primarily* through the Christian leader is the supreme way. *It is not the only way, but it is primary.*

The individual leader who seeks to affect the social situation may try two methods in order to achieve his purpose. He may stand outside of it, as it were, and try to change it as a fireman endeavors to put out a fire. Standing outside of it, the fireman guides a torrent of water upon the flames. So there are men and women who seek to help society by looking upon themselves as outside the conditions with which they seek to deal. But on the other hand, there is the totally different way of helping society by recognizing that the worker himself is part of the social problem. He sees himself as part of the fire to be put out, as it were. He cannot detach himself as if all his own personal problems had nothing to do with the social situation, while he simply deals with social conditions.

It is this latter way which is Christ's way. He says to the leader whom he seeks to lead: "You are part of the social organism which you seek to change, and if you are to change it you must yourself be changed." The individual who pursues Christ's way of changing the world is all the time being changed in his own inner life. He does not, he cannot, ignore the fact that his own character and life and problems are just as much a part of the situation as those of other people. He recognizes that it would be great foolishness to work for the redemption of society, if his own case were not being attended to at the same time.

It is just here that a good deal of confusion arises. There are large numbers of well meaning people who are completely satisfied because they are doing good work. *But the unfortunate thing is that what they are trying to do in society has not yet been achieved in themselves.* They are seeking, let us say, economic soundness in their community, but they themselves are not living in an attitude of economic soundness towards society. They are trying to drive the weeds out of the garden of society, but while they toil at the task they are dropping through holes in their pockets seeds of those very weeds which they are busy uprooting. It may be even worse than that. I have heard men rail against our present social order in such a spirit of unbridled vindictiveness, that unless they were greatly changed in their own inner life they

would turn the Utopia for which they were laboring into an inferno of hate.

In seeking the realization of the world's new day, Christ lays the stress primarily upon individual renewal, that each may bring to the corporate life that personal soundness which is the guarantee of larger renewal. Christ challenges each renewed life to become a propagandist, a leader, for such a life has a secret, a message, a contribution which is of vital importance to the life of the whole world.

IV

While it is true that the supreme emphasis is laid by Christ upon the sound contribution which the individual makes to the world, it is also true that economic conditions have an important effect upon the individual. Large numbers of people are stunted by an economic fear. They are afraid of the consequences of being sick, of losing their position, of the fierce competition with which they have to contend, of the problem of a subsistence. While it is true that the triumph of the Spirit of Christ in a life will mean a great victory over economic fears, it is also true that Christ has a vast interest in the conditions under which men and women live. It is quite true he had a kind of contempt for physical comfort, and he taught his disciples to have no fear of pain or death; at the same time he had a passionate enthusiasm for the cause of the poor and the oppressed. He taught that men were the providence of God to men, that for men to ignore the oppressive conditions under which their fellows lived was to earn the certain judgment of God.

Since the Spirit of Christ is the spirit of a great compassion, and since the Spirit of Christ moves towards corporate expression, therefore it must carry that corporate compassion against the citadel of corporate injustice wherever it exists. Jesus voiced that temper when he said of Herod: "Go tell that fox." He had national personalities in his mind. When he exposed the Pharisees he had false national tendencies as the object of his denunciation. But he never surrendered his cause to any mere social system. He carried the whole of his program into the human situation. He never retreated from the supreme facts—God, the soul, and human destiny.

CHAPTER XII

The Individual Contribution to Progress

DAILY READINGS

Twelfth Week, First Day: Personal Atmosphere

And they said one to another, Was not our heart burning within us, while he spake to us in the way, while he opened to us the scriptures? And they rose up that very hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them.—Luke 24: 32, 33.

Is not this the very first point of contact between an individual and the world in which he lives? It is not primarily what he says, or even what he may try to achieve, but the atmosphere he unconsciously exhales, which is the immediate impact upon others. It is a powerful social fact for good or evil. Some people, apart altogether from the value of their words, or even actions, produce in us a cleansing, liberating, healing influence. We go from their presence at our best. There are others from whom we go fettered, silent, depressed, and not at our best.

Every one of us is unconsciously exerting some such power, for there is no escape from it. We are all drawing the world upward, or dragging it downward, according to the atmosphere which goes out from us.

It is the inner condition which throws off this by-product. And our inner condition may be changed according as we are related to the eternal or otherwise. Through communion with Christ there may be started a change in the inner life which all unconsciously works out as a healing spell upon others.

Withdrawal from such communion often produces an entirely opposite effect.

Do we give Christ an opportunity to exert his uplifting ministry through us?

Twelfth Week, Second Day: Suggestion of Eternal Reality

And being let go, they came to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said unto them. And they, when they heard it, lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, O Lord, thou that didst make the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is: who by the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of our father David thy servant, didst say,

Why did the Gentiles rage,
And the peoples imagine vain things?

—Acts 4: 23-25.

It must be so that large numbers of people crave to get away from the tyranny of material things. They are surfeited by the sights and sounds of the world, without themselves being able to find escape into the presence of God. But they are ready and eager to have done for them what Wordsworth's poetry did for John Stuart Mill.

I heard one man say of another that when he heard him speak it was as if a curtain had been drawn aside and he saw into the eternal. A life had done what argument had completely failed to do. Something like this happened when a friend heard Mr. Lincoln speak at Cooper Union in New York.

It has always seemed to me that the personality of Stephen did some such service for Saul of Tarsus. Indeed, it would seem as if the apostles arrested the attention of their contemporaries for their message to a large degree in this way. Their lives suggested, unveiled, revealed, the spiritual world.

There are surely multitudes ready to let go their feverish grasp of temporal things, if only there were a sufficiently real revelation of what is beyond the veil of sense to capture them. This has been done in the past for whole communities by transfigured individuals. And those individuals did more for the moral and social uplifting of their fellows than any other

factor in the situation, for they brought men face to face with God.

Is the eternal world sufficiently real to us to make it real to others through us?

Twelfth Week, Third Day: Moral Originality

Now there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound was heard, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speaking in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying, Behold, are not all these that speak Galilæans? And how hear we, every man in our own language wherein we were born?—Acts 2: 5-8.

Union with Christ enabled men to live beyond their surroundings. There were forces within them, they had an aim and a message for which their contemporaries could not account. They were beyond their times. That is the place of Christianity and the function of Christians in the world. They were meant to be the pioneers of a program which is ahead of the age. The part given them to play is not born of eccentricity, for eccentricity may be merely aggressive self-consciousness. The follower of Christ is called upon to take a morally original part in the life of the world. For Christ seeks to lead the world out beyond its moral stupidities and repetitions. When we live in an attitude of disobedience, we simply live over what has been lived. It is an imitation. It is an echo of the past. Sin is a mere repetition of an old story. But as Christ gets the right of way in Christian lives, there is started a movement beyond the frontier of convention. For there is no such thing as moral originality apart from the overture of a divine suggestion finding hospitality in responsive souls. Christians, and Christian churches, must either be reaching beyond things as they are or lose their real function. A Christianity which merely follows public opinion instead of creating it is not the Christianity of Christ.

Are we echoes of Christ or of our surroundings?

Twelfth Week, Fourth Day: Testimony

He therefore answered, Whether he is a sinner, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I

see. They said therefore unto him, What did he do to thee? how opened he thine eyes? He answered them, I told you even now, and ye did not hear; wherefore would ye hear it again? would ye also become his disciples?—John 9: 25-27.

Christ cannot be satisfied by merely doing good through the lives of his disciples. He has a secret to communicate, a message to deliver, through each one. For every Christian has been called to be a witness. He may not preach, but he must bear witness. The Christian idea of progress is to carry the whole of essential Christianity into the life of the world. Christianity not only offers through the Christian witness the fruit of kindly deeds, which it has grown on the tree of its life; it also scatters the seeds from which the fruit has grown.

Can there be any real progress without there being brought into it the fundamental message of Christ to the troubled soul? There are very many eagerly waiting for the Christian's secret of inner peace, and that secret may perhaps be most effectively communicated through the testimony of those who have experienced it. Where vast numbers are confused is in knowing how to enter definitely into the peace of Christ. So much preaching is over their heads, or wide of the mark—they want a simple, unvarnished explanation as to how others have entered into Christian reality. There must be a return to religious conversation, free from cant, if large numbers of seekers are to find the way of peace.

The witness must summon the courage to help humbly and tactfully the shy soul groping for light.

Have we a spiritual secret which would be of immense value to those who are blindly seeking for it?

Twelfth Week, Fifth Day: Social Sympathy

And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing. Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.—I Cor. 13: 3, 4.

Christianity does not understand love to be merely another word for service. Service may be simply professionalism, a hard officialism, which tends to eliminate from service the

deepest elements in personality. We cannot eliminate love from service without hardening the inner life, without withholding from those whom we serve that which is their due.

The New Testament idea of love is the ordinary article at high pressure. This word needs reinterpretation as applied to social relations, for without Christian love there can be no abiding social cohesion. As tepid water is not an equivalent for steam, so mere kindly feeling is not enough for the task of Christian love. We are exposed to the temptations of brainless sentiment on the one hand and to heartless mechanism on the other. Christian love has both a great self-effacing sympathy and an intellectual heroism in it. The reason why it has often become tepid is sometimes because the intellectual heroism necessary in order to give it social reality has been lacking; in other instances the passionate sympathy has been wanting. We need a greater working balance between these two elements in Christian love.

Is my social sympathy expressing itself through both heart and mind?

Twelfth Week, Sixth Day: A Confident Spirit

Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away.—I Cor. 13: 7, 8.

Faith in Christ creates a spirit of trust in our fellows, and a sanguine attitude towards the tasks in front of us. This may be expressed as a spirit of confidence. Without such a relation to society we cannot become vital factors in the achievement of progress. For confidence is that which makes corporate existence possible. Without it the family life, friendship, commerce, finance, could not hold together. Until, therefore, individuals are dominated by this temper they cannot be sharers in a progressive movement; in fact they may simply succeed in damaging what already exists of it. A man without trust in his fellows and without the spirit of optimism becomes anti-social.

In our sustained association with Christ, however, both aspects of the spirit of confidence are strengthened. None were so trustful of his fellows as Jesus was. He believed in

the highest possibilities of the worst of men; he committed the most transcendent of causes to the hands of men who had formerly failed. No one was ever so sanguine of achievement in relation to the tasks in front of him as was the Master.

As we appropriate this spirit of our Leader we become fit to cooperate in the divine enterprise of progress.

Are we bringing something of this bearing to a panic-stricken world?

Twelfth Week, Seventh Day: Intercessory Prayer

But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion for them, because they were distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest indeed is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth laborers into his harvest.—Matt. 9: 36-38.

Those who know what prayer really means, through the practice of it, are convinced that this is a supreme element in the problem of the renewal of the world. They have learned that it is through prayer God gets his opportunity to use the human personality as a means for the conveyance of divine power and illumination to other lives. For intercessory prayer is not an attempt to use God for personal ends; it is rather the offering up of the Christian life to become a medium, an instrument, of the divine activity in reaching lives. It is thus we become co-workers with God. If God did his work directly upon other lives we could not cooperate with him.

In other spheres than the spiritual, it is the personalities of men which have brought the invisible laws of God down to the practical needs of mankind. The gardener cooperates with nature in the production of a new kind of rose. The inventor brings a law which has always existed down to the actual necessities of the hour. Man rises into copartnership with God on behalf of man, his personality becomes the conductor of reality from the invisible down to practical needs. So in intercession one yields up his being to the purpose and power of God to become an opportunity for God. It is those who pray most who are most deeply convinced that inter-

cession fulfils a sublime function in God's contact with humanity.

Is intercessory prayer a working element in our contribution to progress?

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

I

In considering some of the elements in the fundamental Christian contribution to social progress we are not here concerned with the question as to the ultimate social theory which shall govern society.

It is not because that problem is considered to be of small consequence, but simply because our purpose is to find an immediate Christian point of contact with the world as it is. There is no large unanimity as to what is coming, or as to what should come, in the way of the highest form of social order. The literature upon this subject is almost as varied as it is vast. I never realized what different opinions individuals could hold upon this topic until I heard Mr. Bernard Shaw and Mr. G. K. Chesterton publicly debate upon socialism. That gathering appeared to me to be a veritable cave of Adullam, of two opposing camps in an attitude of almost fanatical fervor.

While it is the duty of a Christian to think through the question of a satisfactory theory of social renewal, if he has the time, there is the immediate and undeniable duty of bringing to the social situation that which any righteous form of social order will require if it is to guarantee stability and progress.

We have a practical relation to the world as it is today, and it is possible for us to bring a contribution which shall be an asset in whatever may be its outlook tomorrow. *One thing is certain, there can be no adequate attempt to realize the visible ideal social state except as there is first of all the recognition that there is an invisible one.* There must be a spiritual apprehension of a great invisible reality before there can be a social attempt to achieve it. There are two universes, if you like, an intangible and a tangible. Christianity is the embodiment of the invasion of the unseen universe upon the seen. *If we are to be true to the spirit of Christ we must maintain a broader relation to the world situation than to*

identify it completely with any theory of social reformation.

Jesus Christ did not surrender his cause to any partisanship of his time, and no doubt the temptation presented itself, for zealous partisanship existed in many directions in the public outlook. If Jesus had made such a surrender, it would of course have turned into a mere local and passing movement his world outlook and his outlook through the ages of time.

II

The first thing, then, for the Christian who seeks to translate the mind of Christ into social facts is to recognize that the program which it is his business to fulfil is Christ's program. It is for him to cling to the leadership of the supreme Leader, to refuse to surrender to a merely popular and partial interpretation of it the program that Christ expects him to make effective.

The temptation confronts the disciple of Christ who has a keen social sympathy, to break away from the leadership of the Leader, and to plunge into the seething welter of confusion—to do something, anything, without concern for the relation of the part to the whole, without vision as to what is of primary and what is of secondary importance, to slash away at something.

But the individual Christian who is to have a share in Christ's program for the coming of the Kingdom of God must grasp the momentous fact that the one kind of effort which counts from Christ's point of view is obedient effort. For Christ has the full program in his own keeping, and his program is a unit; it has a unity of scheme, and no one man can see his particular sphere in that scheme of things except as he maintains his relation to Him who is directing the campaign.

It is only thus that there can be any kind of hope of carrying out a plan with unity of design in it, only thus that primary things will have precedence over secondary things, and it may be that the secondary things will be unnecessary because included in the primary things. It is only in this attitude that each worker and his work will come closer to every other worker.

It is in this way that the Christian worker can see the dimensions of the social situation and be better able to diagnose human unrest and discontent.

There is a broken and partial view of the social situation which is both mischievous and distressing. For one sometimes encounters two opposing types of workers, sometimes tragically suspicious and hostile, and both claiming Jesus as the authority for their position. The one focuses wholly on the social aspect, and the other wholly upon the individual and spiritual. It is all very lamentable, for it is the fruit of partial vision. It is a rending of the program of Christ, and each clings to his fragment. The result is that social work tends to become despiritualized, and spiritual work to become dehumanized. The atmosphere of Pentecost does not obtain its opportunity among social efforts and the spirit of service does not get its place in relation to spiritual contemplation.

The constant need is to maintain the unity of the program of Christ, not by lowering the spiritual but by spiritualizing the social and socializing the spiritual. This calls for a deeper spirituality, for it is only spiritual power which can weld these parts into an effective unity.

III

The Christian worker who takes his directions from his Master recognizes that the program of Christ is based upon man's spiritual condition and relations. Everything else issues out of that situation. It is man's spiritual nature which invests every phase of his welfare with sanctity. The spiritual man, however much he may see the need for social renewal, will never lose sight of the supreme place of emphasis. For example, let me quote from the late Mr. Keir Hardie, who was one of the earliest socialist leaders in England. He said: "People talked about social reform and better conditions of life, but the whole experience of history made it manifest that the mere increase of material well-being in a race only led to further deterioration. From an experience of fifty-six years, material pleasures were the least satisfying. It rested upon the inner life—the ego, the soul, whether life is to be noble, strong, clean, pure, or ignoble and degrading." That reveals the spiritual view, and it is all the more impressive when it comes from one who spent over fifty years of his life in social agitation.

When a worker takes the position of laying the heaviest weight of blame for human failure upon social conditions, does he not thereby encourage some men to lie back and wait

for the coming of happier conditions? A man expecting a legacy shortly might cease to apply himself, and by a wrong relation to it that legacy could easily prove to be a curse instead of a blessing. If you tell a man that he cannot do good work until his surroundings are improved, he may believe it and slacken his effort. But if you tell him that he can work and work well, and in the meantime something is being done to deal with his surroundings, you are helping to preserve the economic soundness of the man's relation to society. The finest types of character have been bred in the midst of severe difficulties. At any rate, the point is that if the disciple of Christ is himself bringing economic soundness to the social situation, he must also encourage others so to do. He must keep the immediate emphasis where Christ placed it.

On the other hand, he dare not surrender to an unwarrantable optimism as to what is going to issue out of mere congenial social conditions if, and when, they arrive. There is a vague and flabby optimism which often intoxicates men's minds when they see the tide of material prosperity rolling in.

But so far as moral progress is concerned, such optimism has no sanction from Christ. Progress is not by any means necessarily the result of material abundance; it is not the result of any naturalistic evolution. It has been possible only as individuals yielded themselves to God as the instruments of God. There have been periods when the world did not grow better, but worse, not because God had no progressive program to unfold, but because he did not find human cooperation. Devolution is as real an historical fact as evolution.

Christ inspires a great optimism, but it is created in his presence, as men and women live under his direction, conspiring to carry out his purposes. Such optimism springs from the triumph of the divine will, and never from the mere fact of economic affluence.

Whatever Christianity may do for progress, it must carry its whole soul into the problems of mankind. The Christian soldier of the common good cannot surrender to the social ideals of those who are working on another level than his in the various enterprises of the world. They may be successful, industrious, masterful; they may appear to be conquering the world, and yet at the same time they are really being conquered by it—as Rome, while it conquered Greece, in a still more real

way was conquered by Greece. As Jesus refused to identify his relation to the world with any mere party program and thereby maintained his supreme and universal contact, so must we, who own Christ as Lord, live in the succession of Christ's relation to men, by keeping the emphasis where he put it. For after all that is what Christianity is here for, to lead and not to follow, to interpret the leadership of Christ to disillusioned men.

CHAPTER XIII

Social Contacts

DAILY READINGS

Thirteenth Week, First Day: The Family

Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother (which is the first commandment with promise), that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord.—Eph. 6: 1-4.

Individual life is partial life—a world of individuals would mean a world of incompleteness. The individual after all is a fragment; he is a part of the family as a branch is part of a tree. Without the family relation the greatest words of all languages would be shorn of their value and meaning. There would be no education for the noblest impulses in human life.

The Christian individual stands committed to the family as an irreducible social unit, as a permanent institution. He is pledged to bring to it the highest he knows, the best that he has, the richest that God bestows upon him. To defraud the family of the best is to injure that circle in which life's supreme impressions are made, and its permanent lessons learned. *The Christian relation to the family is fundamentally that of spiritual and moral loyalty. The fact that Christ claims the first place from each does not impair the bond between the various members of the household.*

In the highest sense it guarantees the permanence and enrichment of the relationship. Individual primary loyalty to Christ purifies the affection which one brings to the family life. A lukewarm relation to Christ lessens the quality of affection given to each other. The family life without the encouragement of spirituality weakens and impoverishes its own life, but genuine family religion becomes the safeguard of its own highest existence, and the bulwark of society.

Do we bring a really Christian contribution to family life?

Thirteenth Week, Second Day: The Church

And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell.—Col. 1: 18, 19.

A Christian is related to the Church *historically,* for it was through the Church that the knowledge of Christ was conveyed to him. He is related to the Church *biologically,* because of his relation to Christ, and to those who are Christ's. For the Church grew out of the gathering together of those to whom Christ was the central reality of their lives. Meeting together in his name was their supreme social instinct, and the proclamation of his name was the soul of their contact with the world.

The Christian's relation to the Church is governed not only by the grace which he gets through it, but also by what he brings to it. For he owes the contribution of his worship, which is a corporate act. He owes the contribution of *fellowship* with his fellow Christians, as a part of the whole. He owes the contribution of his *service* in carrying out with others the mind of Christ.

But it is a Church to which the Christian owes his allegiance; it is to a genuine spiritual fellowship gathered into the name of Christ. He does not owe it to a mere organization. The Church of Christ is a spiritual, biological, social fact.

Is our relation to the Church governed by our obligation to the fellowship as well as by what it brings to us?

Thirteenth Week, Third Day: As an Employer

Knowing that whatsoever good thing each one doeth, the same shall he receive again from the Lord, whether he be bond or free. And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, and forbear threatening: knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no respect of persons with him.—Eph. 6: 8, 9.

I have met employers who have insisted that cooperation must govern their relations with their employes. Their business was a partnership of profit sharing, and one cannot fail

to observe that this method is on the increase. There are others who say that they would willingly pursue this course, but their profits are so small in the best years that in order to keep their business going in lean years they would be compelled to levy assessments upon their employes. There are yet others who say frankly, "Business is business. We are willing to give a fair wage, but the profits are ours to use according to our best judgment." It is this last statement upon which Christian employers must have some definite conviction. There are signs in our time which call for clear thinking, if Christian employers are to have an influential share in the leadership of public opinion.

The Christian employer, however perplexed he may be regarding the highest form of social order, must be willing to follow light wherever it leads him. He will not let his own material interests control him. In the meantime his relations with his employes will be fraternal. I knew one employer who spent most of his evenings visiting his sick workmen. Every man in that concern knew that the man at the head of it was his interested and sympathetic comrade. There never was a strike in that factory.

Thirteenth Week, Fourth Day: As an Employe

Servants, be obedient unto them that according to the flesh are your masters, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not in the way of eye-service, as menpleasers; but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as unto the Lord, and not unto men.—Eph. 6: 5-7.

The employe is here urged to do his duty as the servant of Christ, and not merely to get through with a task.

It is this attitude of doing one's work as a Christian which raises a man above all kinds of servitude. While such a man labors, his work is baptizing his life with new power. He lives far above slavery to a position, for Christ has liberated him. He is Christ's free man, even though he has to toil hard through the days; his labor is the honest expression of his soul.

Besides, the relation of a Christian employe is one of good will. He may sometimes have to speak very frankly, but there is no hate or bitterness in his heart. Men can discuss

anything, so long as the spirit is right. It is when vindictiveness enters into a relationship that there is really no solution of a difficulty. In that temper if it is not one thing that is wrong, it is another. A prominent lawyer said to me not long ago that a great deal of litigation was simply the warfare of a vindictive spirit, which ought to have been conquered.

In the Christian attitude toward his work and his employer, a man is not dependent upon human praise. He is grateful for appreciation, but if it does not come he is not soured thereby, for he is looking to his Lord for a verdict upon what he does.

Do we perform our task first of all as unto Christ?

Thirteenth Week, Fifth Day: As a Friend

Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil.—I Cor. 13: 4, 5.

A Christian learns from his Master that life's greatest achievement is not to get but to give. As a friend he is not looking for cordial declarations towards himself, but he maintains kindly relations towards others. Sorrow and disappointment await those who are constantly taking the temperature of the feeling of others towards them. Such an attitude mars many a freshman's year at college. It makes men become shrinking, supersensitive, and cruelly suspicious. If unchecked, it may be the beginning of a lifelong cynicism.

A Christian not only counts the primary element in friendship as giving, but he has something to give, for Christ enriches his deepest self. He has to see to it for his friend's sake as well as for his own, that he grows in the inner life. He must be at his best. "For their sakes I sanctify myself."

A Christian receives friendship as well as gives it, and if he follows Christ he receives it for itself and not for the garb in which it comes. Some of the choicest friendships may come with no promise of worldly advantage, and in refusing them many have refused life's richest gifts. It is the spirit of worldliness which has for many emptied out the wealth of meaning that there is in friendship. A merely calculating association with desirable people is not friendship.

Are we looking for friends, or giving ourselves as friends?

Thirteenth Week, Sixth Day: The Community

Jesus therefore lifting up his eyes, and seeing that a great multitude cometh unto him, saith unto Philip, Whence are we to buy bread that these may eat? And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, Two hundred shillings' worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here, who hath five barley loaves, and two fishes: but what are these among so many?—John 6: 5-9.

It is astonishing how many Christian people have no point of contact with the opportunities for service in a community. One is sometimes tempted to think that such service is confined to one or two classes of the population, and it is difficult to find out whether those other classes are not wanted, or whether they do not care to serve. At any rate there are large numbers of Christian people who ought to have a definite *personal* appeal made to them for service in the town where they live. It may be that they are shy, lacking assurance, and they will never take the initiative. They must be met more than half way. Some one must lay some definite challenge upon them. A clearing house for the varieties of service in a community, where individuals could readily see what opportunities there are, would go far to solve the situation as it now stands. Too often a man is asked to do something for which he knows he is not fitted; he refuses, and the matter ends there. He is not indifferent, but the right work has not yet been presented to him. Yet there is a sphere for him and he has a latent capacity for the sphere, but they have not yet met.

The press of a town would surely be willing to aid in giving publicity to the various aspects of opportunity for public service.

Have we a relation of definite service to our community?

Thirteenth Week, Seventh Day: The Nation

Ye are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under the bushel, but on the stand; and it shineth unto all that are in the house. Even so let your light shine before men; that

they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.—Matt. 5: 14-16.

The example of Jesus proclaims every true disciple as a lover of his country, and as ready to live or die for his country.

The truest patriotism implies that each shall bring the highest that he knows, the best that is in him, to this service. No man is giving himself completely—even if he lays down his physical life—if he does not give his whole being. We must pass on to the nation the best we have received. We must transmit through our personality the fruits of all the hallowed sacrifices of the past. A nation can be great in itself and able to influence the rest of the world only as its citizens supply the moral reality necessary to achieve its destiny. The moral condition of a nation is its supreme asset, and that condition is neither more nor less than the sum of the moral qualities in all citizens.

Arising out of patriotism, but not as a substitute for it, Jesus also revealed a universal contact. And it is our problem to realize in some practical way such a Christian universal sympathy. That may be attempted through a definite concern for world-wide Christian missionary enterprise on the one hand, and for the fostering of a spirit of internationalism on the other.

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

I

The individual serves most effectively only in relation to organized effort. Achievement everywhere is the result of cooperation. You find this corporate idea running through nature and human nature. In a beehive organization brings about results that could not otherwise be achieved. In human history the clan groups are the early expression of this principle of combination.

The Christian individual historically found his supreme opportunity in and through the Church. Christianity has two main centers towards which it seeks to have individuals move in their service: first, the Christian community, and second, the Kingdom of God.

The Christian community is based upon an instinctive spirit-

ual association. In this association each has a relation to Christ and to each other. The repudiation of these relations is disloyalty to the whole corporate situation.

The Church exists for the coming of the Kingdom of God. But there must be a Church, if there is to be a Kingdom as Christ conceived it, if it is to surpass the partial glimpses we have seen of it. *If the Kingdom of God on earth is to be in any way an ordered, morally exact, social fact, then it must have an ordered, morally exact means of achievement.* If it is to be a universal fact it can spring only from that origin which has a universal program and outlook. Therefore the disciples of Christ owe an allegiance to the Church for the sake of the coming of the Kingdom.

The Church, however, is not an end in itself in its relation to the Kingdom; it is a means to an end. The immediate followers of Jesus were not guilty of falsifying the emphasis Jesus laid on the Kingdom idea. The mischief was wrought later, when the Church came to be considered as an end rather than as an instrument to bring in the Kingdom.

The Kingdom of God is the other element in the idea of corporateness inherent in historical Christianity.

As taught by Jesus, the Kingdom of God was at once within the individual, and was also social. *Socially the Kingdom was to be the realization of human relations in which the will of God would be both the motive and the goal.* This Kingdom is to be realized not merely in one sphere of life, but in every department of human interest. It is the Christian ideal for the life of the world.

As we have seen, for the coming of this Kingdom Jesus refused to be identified with any contemporary theory of social reformation. He would not stir from seeing the human situation in the light of eternal reality.

II

Therefore in order to have the Kingdom come in Christ's way and to the extent of his universal purpose, there must be a new turning to the Church to achieve it. For the Church is the extension of the life and purpose of Christ. You say—not as it is, and I quite agree. Large numbers of people, whether we like it or not, have lost faith in the power of the Church to realize the Kingdom in the midst of the institutions

of society. They point to the comparative impotence of the Church during these heart-breaking days.

But while that may all be very true, it is still the function of the Church to fulfil Christ's purpose in bringing in the Kingdom of God. The Church may have lost its unction, but it cannot lose its function. For Christ is behind it and it is only he who can bring in a universal Kingdom of God. What other agency or group of agencies could do it? Where would the universal scheme come from, the universal morality? It is not that the Church should be ignored, or scrapped, it is that it should be brought back into the presence of the Living Lord. The summons is loud to every one of us who belongs to the Church to come back anew under the spell of the living, creative Center of the Church, to dedicate ourselves afresh for the universal coming of the Kingdom. Then there is a task which must be faced—stupendous as it is, shrink from it as we may.

The Church is being called by the condition of the world to a more serious effort than ever before towards some form of corporate unity. If the Church had a vital sense of the Lord's presence and a united purpose in all its parts during this tragic time, who will say there would be no distinct message? But so long as the Church's life is competitive instead of co-operative, so long as it is driven in upon its own local, self-conscious, divisive existence, how can it respond to Christ's cosmic ambitions for it? How can the Church rebuke the institutions of society for their heartless competitions, so long as its own practical policy moves along the same line?

It is very easy to take refuge in happy generalizations about God fulfilling his purpose in a great variety of ways, and if the Kingdom does not come through the Church then it will come through other channels. But when those who are members of the body of Christ talk like that, are they not losing their conviction as to how the Kingdom is to come? Are they not throwing the ship's chart and compass overboard and merrily trusting to fate that things will come out all right? Where is the old warrior declaration: "I am persuaded that He is able"?

Never did this old world need guidance as it requires it now. And there is a strong sense in the minds of multitudes that Christ is able to give it its fresh start. But the tragic fact is that Christ does not get his opportunity, because of

the preoccupation, distraction, and rivalry of those who are the members of his body.

III

There are things that must be done in and for society which only Christ can adequately achieve. The world must have an increasing sense of the meaning of righteousness and of sin. We have seen into what a welter of moral confusion men fall when they let go their hold upon religion in general and vital Christianity in particular. It is significant to hear Mr. H. G. Wells say that there is no sufficient bond for the family apart from religion. Who quickened the darkened conscience of the 18th century in England? Was it not the men who knew Jesus Christ?

Society must have an increasing sense that there is a soul behind the social fabric; that there is the possibility of warmth for those who freeze amidst the frigid facts of existence; that there is a reason for optimism; that there is a basis for peace.

It wistfully listens for a certain message upon the end and aim of life—for the right emphasis and proportion in living. It looks to see a revelation in men and women of the fact of eternal life, not merely as a hope, but as an actual experience lived out amongst the painful facts of today. It is not clear upon these things. And in its confusion does it not, hoping against fears, turn once more for a message to those who know Christ? While it asks for that message, it silently hopes that the Church will shake itself free from the world's own temper. A man who asks to be awakened at a certain hour insists that it take place, even though he beats him who does the awakening. Is not this the mood in which at least sections of society turn towards those who know the secret of Jesus? It is as if men were saying to the Church, "Do not be afraid of us, do not compromise with us, do not seek our favor or fear our frown; tell us what you have from your Lord, for we need it. We are disillusioned souls; if you love us, forget yourself, and give us the gospel of a new hope."

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